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BILDAD AKERS: HIS BOOK

THE NOTIONS AND EXPERIENCES
OF A QUAINT RURAL PHILOSO-
PHER WHO THINKS FOR HIMSELF.

EDITED BY

THOMAS N. IVEY

Editor Raleigh Christian Advocate
and Southern Methodist Handbook



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BY

THOMAS N. IVEY.

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DEDICATION.

TO THOSE MEN AND WOMEN WHOSE LIFE CIRCLE WAS NARROWED GEOGRAPHICALLY, EDUCATIONALLY, AND SOCIALLY BY THE RUGGED FORCES OF A GENERATION NOW GONE, WHO BOAST OF NO HALL-MARK SAVE THAT OF HIGH CHRISTIAN MANHOOD AND WOMANHOOD, BUT WHO, BY THE GRACE OF GOD, SOBER INDUSTRY, AND SIMPLE RECTITUDE, AND THROUGH THE RICHNESS OF THAT LEGACY RECEIVED FROM ANCESTORS OF PURE BLOOD AND A SOUND CONSCIENCE HAVE BECOME THE REPOSITORIES OF A WISDOM WHICH BELONGS TO THE BEST AND LARGEST LIFE.

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EDITOR'S STATEMENT.

There have appeared from time to time, during the last six years, in the Raleigh Christian Advocate, organ of the North Carolina Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, a number of letters written by one who signed himself "Bildad Akers"; also editorials embodying interviews with the quaint old philosopher of Biblical name. Bildad Akers at once became a favorite with the readers of the Advocate. His sayings were quoted far and wide. Great curiosity as to his personality and abiding place was evinced by many. The editor deems it sufficient to say only that our philosopher is Bildad Akers.

So many requests for the publication of the articles and letters in book form have been made that the editor feels that he has no right to deny the request. He presents "Bildad Akers: His Book" to the reading public. In doing so he feels that he is presenting a book which, neither fiction nor biography, and by no means belonging to what some call "high literature," is nevertheless one of the most serious books that can be written. For in the heart of almost every paragraph there lies a valuable lesson for some one. Let no one suppose for a moment that Bildad Akers is frivolous. The editor can testify that

EDITOR'S STATEMENT.

every line of the book was written from the standpoint of a high moral purpose. May the book serve to brighten the eye, illuminate the mind, and strengthen the heart of the reader.

THOMAS N. IVEY.

RALEIGH, N. C., Nov. 10, 1909.

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PROLOGUE AND EPILOGUE.

It turned out just as I expected. When, after having sent for Bildad Akers to come to see me, I told him that I was seriously thinking of collecting his sayings and experiences and publishing them in book form, there came a very serious look into his eyes, and there was a tightening of the lines about his large expressive mouth. He looked at the floor, shook slowly his grizzled head, and determinedly said "no."

Then, after a few moments of silence, he turned toward me and said in his characteristic way: "Ivry, these peopple air not wantin' sich a book as comes from Bildad Akers. Thar is too many scholars an potry writers who kin fling hifalutin' langwidge and use sky-scrapin' idees fer sich as me to git any kind o' hearin'."

I reasoned with him and told him that people had become tired of so much deep thought and the dress it wears, and that an occasional presentation of simple thought, clothed in homespun, pleases them more than the dainty fastidious thought of scholars.

"But," said Bildad, "you wouldn't think of usin' my idees and langwidge without dressin' 'em up some—puttin' on 'em their Sundy close, you know, an' makin' 'em fit for compny."

"That is just the point, Bildad," I said; "you hardly ever see in a book anything which is not in a way dressed up in its "Sunday close," and which does not look a little artificial. To see thought in its elemental state and dressed, so to

speak, in nature's garb is one of the demands of human nature. Suppose I were to dress you up in a swallow-tail coat and kid gloves and put a silk hat on your head and turn you loose, what kind of figure would you make in a parlor?"

Bildad's mouth relaxed into a smile as he said: "I'd look like a bloomin' eejit."

"But, as you are now, you are Mr. Bildad Akers, a good citizen, a man of good common sense, and to whom even educated people go for advice. Is not this so?"

"Of course," said Bildad, with a complacent smile.

"Then, don't you see that if I were to dress up your thought and language in the way you suggested, it would only make you tame and ridiculous, while, if I let it remain just as it comes from you, it would be like Mr. Bildad Akers—original, respectable, and interesting?"

"I see the pint," said Bildad.

But his fears were not allayed. His face took on a tenderer look as he gazed at me and said:

"Ivry, I think a sight of you. You have been good to me and have helped me lots. Do you think it will help your reptytashun any as a literary man to be tied up in a rale book with sich a feller as Bildad Akers. Seems to me you should put your name on a book which is more dignified."

I told Bildad that my object in life is not to build up a reputation in the literary world, but to help humanity. I also said that if it is not dignified to introduce to the people such a man

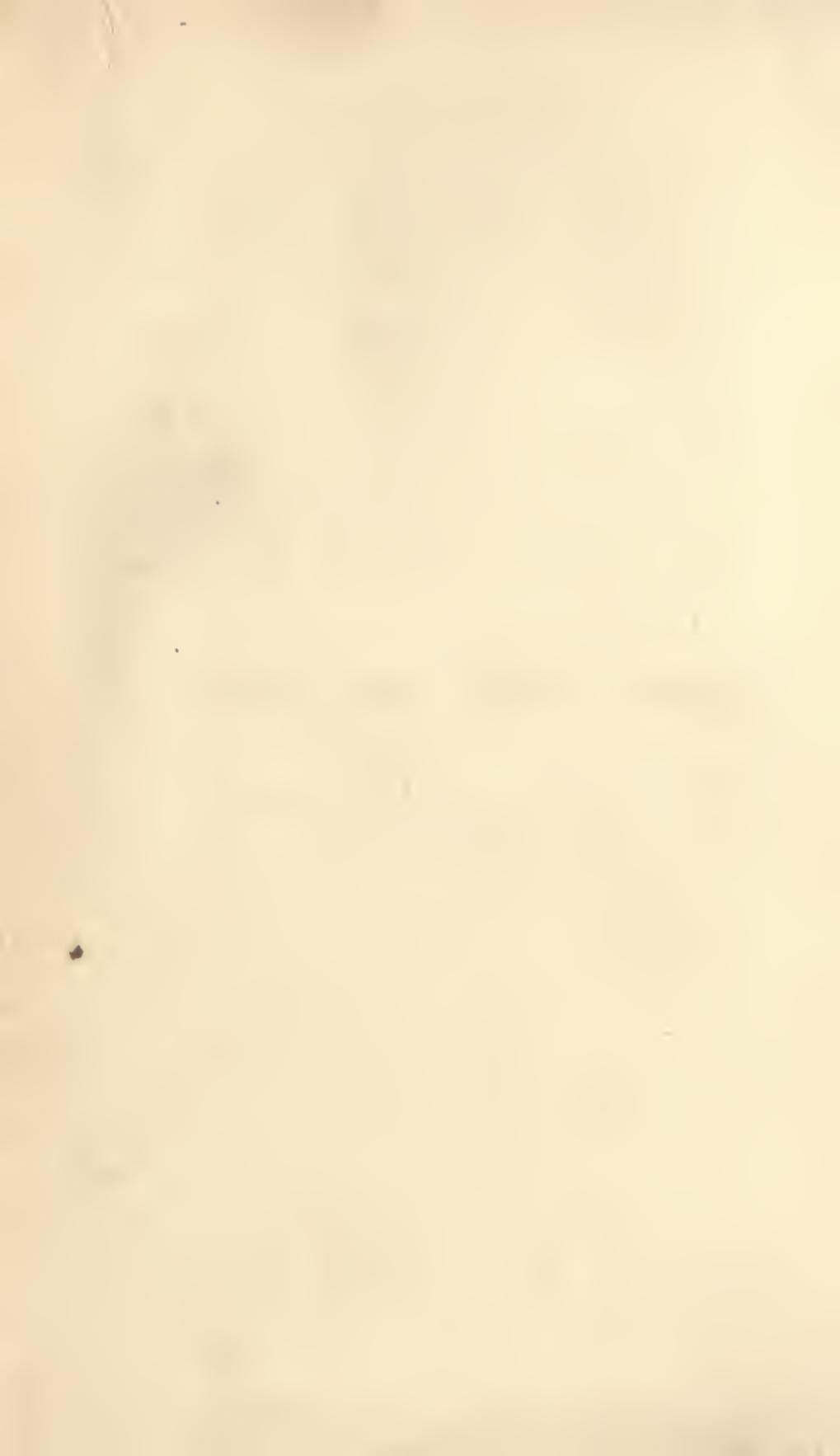
as Bildad Akers and acquaint them with his solution of problems which have been puzzling the minds of the high and great, dignity, for my part, might take the wings of a dove, fly away, and be at rest.

This seemed to please Bildad. I saw that the book had his sanction.

He scratched his head, however, and said, "What you goin' to name it?"

I suggested several titles, none of which seemed to please him. "Homespun Philosophy" did not impress him. He said that "Flosofy is too hifalutin' a name." He objected to "Charcoal Sketches" on the ground that "it'd make peopple think of a nigger minstrul." To my question, "What, then?" he said, "Jest what I writ in my ole blew-back spellin' book nigh onto fifty yeer ago—'Bildad Akers: His Book.'"

This is the name, gentle reader, and the book is open for your inspection.



BILDAD AKERS: HIS BOOK.

"I'll read you the whole from beginning to end, with
the prologue and epilogue, and allow time for the music
between the acts."—*Sheridan, THE CRITIC.*

BILDAD AKERS GOES TO THE "DEESTRICT" CONFERENCE.

"But I am sich a pore stick myself I feel sorry for
every one who is like me, and I have allers made it a
rool not to say nothin' ferninst a man ef I caint say
anything speshal fer him."—*Bildad Akers.*

CHAPTER I.

MR. EDDITOR.—The wether is mighty hot jest now, and as an old man like me has got to set a good deal in the shade these days, I kinder thought I mout as well write you about the Deestrict Confearence which I was a dellygate to. I sent you a pome a month ago comin' next Satidy. I writ it one night arter supper, and I have been lookin' fer it in every Advocate sence, but nary a glimps have I got of the pome. So I will send you a letter 'bout the Deestrict Confearence.

I started afore sun up on Wensdy mornin' so as to take the rale-rode cars at the sidin' so as to get to the place in good time. I allers like to get to a meetin' ahead o' time. When Sally, who is my darter, who has jest quit collidge, saw me startin' off in my duster, she said, "Why, pappy, you shorely are not goin' to wear that old duster? Why, they have gone out of fashun, and that old umbrella, don't tie it up that away. It looks like you mout have a peck of apples in it." "Sally, my darter," says I, "you have had the iluminatin' educational iluminashun of an educashun in a good educashunal school, but you don't know as many things yit as your pappy knows. Common judgement tells me that when a man travels on,

the steam cars a duster is the thing, and this um-berell kivered your grandpappy to many a meet-in,' and it will kiver me, ceptin' it falls to peeces, and it can bag out like a baloon or curl up like a litenin rod jest as it likes." They say I am sot in my ways—that is, Ben says so. So I kissed Lizy and Sally and meandered. My son is teachin' of a summer school over on the Bend, or he would have went too.

Mr. Edditor, did you ever have a kind of lone-sum feelin' when you retched a strange place? Well, I shore had a lonesum feelin' when I retched my stoppin' place. There was plenty of dellygates on the steam cars. I didn't know none of the preechers scusin' the Elder, and he didn't know me. Jonas Bates, my nabor on Sandy Ridge, was on the cars, but he had tried to play big on the cars and smoke a seegar, and it made him so sick he didn't have nary word to speak to nobody. I was shore lonesum.

When I got off at the depow the preecher, I reckin it was, was thar callin' names offen a paper. I stood with my satchell in my hand tell they all got off scusin' one man who told the depow keeper that he was lookin' for Mr. Akers who was to go to the Jedge's. I spoke up and said to him, "I persume I am the indervidual

you are hankerin' arter." He shuck my hand, and looked at my duster and umberell, and pam leaf fan, and said, "I am glad to meet you, Brother Akers; you are to stop with Brother Jim Snooks jest three miles out. He is up at the store now, and ef you hurry you may be able to ride out thar." My dander kinder riz, and I said, "Have you got my name on that paper?" "Yes," he said. "Well, what does it say about Bildad Aker's stoppin' place? Did they put an old man like me out three miles in the kentry?" He was kinder confused, at least his face was red, and he said: "Brother Akers, you are to go up to Jedge Simpson's. I was mistaken." And this is the way Bildad Akers didn't walk three miles to Snookses. The man pintedly thought I was a bloomin' haseeder.

I found a fine home at the Jedges. He give me the best room in the house, right next to the Elder's, and I hearn him say to some one that he found Mr. Akers an interestin' pussonage. How I wish Charles and Ben could have saw me thar. I have allers spied out that men who have the rale stile outwardly and innerdly knows best how to enjy rale wuth in homespun. I didn't dissgrace the Jedge and his family, unless it was when I was tryin' to cut some green lookin'

plums with a knife. I believe they called 'em ollives and they wasn't ripe. They had a kinder furrin taste. But there was no laffin' by the Jedge and his famly. They zibited their raisin' thar.

Well, I shorely enyyed the confearance; I staid the last minnit. This thing of preechers and dellygates breakin' away afore the close of the meetin' like a passel of colts out of a pasture should stop. What does the Quarterly send dellygates for cept it is to stay and do somethin'? They 'lected dellygates to the confearance at Golesboro and thar was only ten of us to do any votin'. I hope that Ben and Charles will diskiver that I liked only one vote of bein' lected. They allers said I could not be lected to nothin'. But that is bekase Charles had that unfortunate missfortune in pollyticks some time ago.

I liked the Elder's way of callin' out the dellygates to give their views on sartin subjects. The Babtisses beat us in havin' a hooraw time at their Soshiashuns bekase every mother's son of em senses that the meetin' belongs to them. Somehow or tother in the Deestrict Confearences I have been to, the idee seemed to be that the meetin' belonged to the Elder, and that ef every one didn't walk close to the line, there would be some-thin' to pay. I've seed dellygates lyin' low in

the meetin' and they made me think of rabbits squattin' in a clump of broom sedge. The idee is for every dellygate to feel that the meetin' is theirs, and that he has the right to call out on every subject and idee that spikes him. Why, I made a speech on quarterage raisin' that they are talkin' about yit. I allers did have a streek of pure home made orrtory in me.

Endurin' of the meetin' I hearn my preecher preech. He didn't seem as peart as he does gin'erally, but then I've hearn that a preacher caint do his levelest at a Deestrict Confeareance ceptin' he has an uncommon amount of sanctyfyed gall. They say that preechin' to preechers is like runnin' ferninst snags in new ground.

This minds me that afore goin' to preachin', one night endurin' of the confeareance, I hearn one preecher ask another preecher at the drug store how he liked the sarmont that day. The preecher jest tore that sarmont to peaces. That very sarmont had somehow mellered me and made me feel some how like climbin' a few rods higher on the mounting of grace, but when I hearn the preecher tearin' that sarmont to peaces, I stumbled and sprawled back bout ten feet down the mounting.

I was settin' out on Jedge's porch one night

arter meetin' and a passel of preechers was talkin', and they talked a heap about other preechers, and do you know, I went to bed with a bad taste in my mouth. I think that it was the lint left by a cupple of preechers frailin' the lives and karackters of other preechers. I haint got much to brag about. I have been to school considerable in the summer and know somethin' bout spellin' and speakin'. I have got a good farm and a lovin' famly. I got an average amount of grace at Gunn's Chapel in '54. But I am sich a pore stick myself I feel sorry for every one who is like me, and I have allers made it a rool not to say nothin' ferninst a man, ef I can't say nothin' speshal fer him. I wonder if preechers talk about tother preechers this way at all their meetin's? I hope not. My old pappy used to say that a kind word is the cheapest thing in the world to be as valuable as it is.

Now Ben and Charles, who are kind of ex-sorters and sometimes takes texts (which is ferninst the Dissciplin), will think that all this talk about preechers is about them. But let them think. It will do them good to use their minds a leetle. But they are both mighty good men.

The sorryest thing I done at the confearence was to go to sleep on the last night while the

preecher was prayin' the openin' pra'r. I have repented of this in flax cloth and ashes. I got up arly every mornin' and walked round several hours afore brekfust. By the time preachin' was over at night I felt like gwine to bed. But gwine to bed was no use when the others wanted to talk, and laff, and drink water, and smoke seegars tell nigh midnight. By Satidy night, I was about twelve hours behind in sleep. The preecher prayed fifteen minnits. I was on my knees as every other Methodist ort to be endurin' pra'rs and afore the preecher had finished that part whar he was tellin' the Lord things the Lord knowed long before the preecher was born, I was fast asleep, and when I woke that long winded preecher was givin' out his second hime and I was on my knees, and some people around me was laffin' at me. How mean I felt! I wouldn't have had Lizy to see me fer nothin' in the world. But I felt pearter fer my nap. But why shoot off sich long pra'rs in public?

This minds me of somethin' that happened on Satidy mornin'. A preecher was talkin' bout his open air preachin' on his sirkut. He said he wanted somebody to splain the coincidental way it was that when he would go to the place whar he was to preech in the open ar the win would

be shore to be blowin'. Nobody ansered him. The anser popped into my head at once, and afore I knowed it I riz up in meetin' and said, "I kin tell you the reason, Brother; one gust of wind ginerally brings on another."

But I must shove my pen aside. Its time to turn in the cows from the pastur. I shorely en-
joyed myself at the Jedges. When I left, I told him so. He said, "Don't menshun it." I said to myself "I won't," but here I am tellin' all about it in the Advocate. But what is wrote is wrote.

• Mr. Edditor, what about the Temprunce Con-
venshun in Rolly?

But I drap my pen to bid you a fond adew,
hopin' this will find you enjyin' of the same bles-
sin'.

Yours as ever, from Ebenezer,

BILDAD AKERS.

S. P.—Mr. Edditor, I notice thar is a figgur 3 right afore the letter A in Akers on my labul. Please drap it or drap my paper. Thar aint no sense in havin' it thar. I told my preecher about it last preachin' day, but that 3 is still thar. Drap it.

AFTER THE FAIR.

"I'm a mighty flimsy sort of a saint, but I fight shy
of the church member whose religijn depens on whar he
is at."—*Bildad Akers.*

CHAPTER II.

OCTOBER 20 IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD.

To Mr. Ivy, Rolly, N. C.

MR. EDDITOR:—I went to the Fair at Rolly last week. I enyyed everything I seed, tho I didn't take in everything of course. I hearn that thar was some strange things thar. I got home on a Friday. I lowed to do a sight of work round the house and barn on Satidy, but when I got up on Satidy mornin' and saw how the elements was leakin' with now and then a spit of snow, I knowed it was all up with me about doin' any work. Arter brekfust I read my Bible awhile. Mr. Edditor, do you sell a good clear print Bible What he writes makes intrustin' readin'. Arter readin' my Bible awhile, I read the Advocate. It had a good many things in it, but it seems to me that Dr. Jenkins lays you all out as a writer. What he writes makes intrustin readin'. Arter leavin' some things to read on Sunday, I read the jokes in the almanack. Jest then Lizy come in, and arter goin' for me for layin' papers on the floor, she said. "Bildad, you seem to be out of somethin' to do. Thars some stovewood out in the wet. If that doesn't suit you, why dont you write another letter to the Advocate. Ef you

do, be shore to tell Ben about that meanness he got off about you in his last letter to the Advocate." This was enough. The writin' fire begun to burn in my bones. So here I am writin' agin to my paper.

I don't know what put it into Ben's head to write such a letter as he last writ. Not that I have anything ferninst Ben's writin'. Writin' runs in the famly, you know. But Ben made out that the reason I didn't go out in the kentry when I went to the Deestrict was bekase I would ruther stay in town with the big folks. Why, ef I had my ruthers I would ruther have a home even at a Deestrict in the kentry. But it ruther riled me when I found out that bekase I looked like a haseeder instid of one of them slick fellers I was to be moved out three miles in the kentry. Ben writes any way like distance cuts no ice with him. Why I've saw Ben rest betwixt the eends of a corn row in a acre field.

But I must tell you about our big meetin' at Ebenezer. It broke three weeks ago a comin' next Wensday. It helt only ten days but it was a great meetin'.

The preecher druv about sun down on Satidy evenin'. Who was with him but Sam Moon? Sam does beat all creashun for ridin' with the preecher.

The preecher says he dont care as long as it gives him a chance to excuse himself from haulin' wimmen. I dont like to see a preacher haulin' wimmen round when they dont belong to him. Our preacher is square on this pint.

Lizy always gits up a good meal for the preecher. When he don't eat much she don't complain any. The first time she fed a preecher, he didn't eat much. He had dispespy. Lizy was worried to death about it. I said to her, "Lizy, one thing you must larn. Thar's no place a preecher likes better than whar he feels that he can eat leetle or much jest as he pleases and not hurt the feelin's of the cook. I knowed a preecher to drink four tumblers of buttermilk jest bekase he knowed that if he drunk less thar would be a kind of row at the table." He come jest a leetle of dyin' with the colic. Arter that Lizy made every preecher who come to our house feel that the eatin's was hers and the eatin' was his.

Arter supper Sam took out of his hip pocket a package of sheroots and offered one to the preecher. I am so glad that he didn't take it. I dont like to see preechers a-smokin'. Mr. Edditor, you or some other writer spoke about preechers gatherin' in front of a Church at confeareance and smokin' their seegars. Aint you mistaken about.

that? Have we got preachers who does that? But Sam smoked his'n and squirted his ambere on Lizy's hath which she had jest washed, and he talked like he was one of the biggest pillers in the Church. Sam is a mighty big Methodist at meetin's but he dont mind goin' into a barroom when he goes off to sell his terbaccer. I'm a mighty flimsy sort of a saint, but I fight shy of the church member whose religun depens on whar he is at.

Sam said he was a hopin' the preecher would rub fire and brimstone in his sarmont the next day. Why? says the preacher. At this Sam scratched his head, throwed himself back in his chair, squirted ambere on a nott which had jest struck fire, and said, "Bekase the fellers need it." The preecher said, "Brother Moon, I think you have got the wrong idee about holdin' meetin'. Thars always plenty of members who need revivin'. I always begin my meetins' by preachin' to the church members. In the fust place, they need it as much as the outsiders. In the second place you cant git outsiders to take much intrust ontell they see some intrust the insiders take in themselves. An alter full of church members means several alters full of outsiders."

Sam went out bout this time to see bout the

wether, he said, and I saw a kind of wink in the preecher's eye. Sam kept quiet like but made up fer it by naterally spilin' the next mornin' a lamb quarter Lizy had lowed to use fer dinner.

But we had a good meetin'. Thar was twenty-five jiners in all and they all had been to the alter too.

I must tell you how our preecher tuk 'em in. He read over the rules of the church and splained them and said, Now, ef any of you think you caint keep these rules, you had better not jine. He then read the promusses and splained em so that the leettlest child could sense it. When they had all jined the preacher made a sollum talk to the church bout holpin' the new members on the road to Heaven. Thar's only one mistake the preecher made, and that I have jest thought of when I read what you said in this week's Advocate. It was in not axin' each member if he had a Bible and dissiplin and if he tuck the Church paper. I am like you. I dont see how any member can get along without 'em.

Our quarterly was helt last Sundy. The Elder seemed well pleased. The showin' the stewarts made were allright and I think the Elder and the preecher will go up to confearence with a clean sheet. Our preecher has been with us only one

yeer and we want him back. I expect to go up to the Annual. I am goin' to take notes, and you may hear from me agin.

But I must pintedly choke off this pen. Pleas read this letter with care.

Yours so true,

With a kind adoo,

BILDAD AKERS.

P. S.—If you dont mean to print that potry, please send back the manuscrip.

BILDAD'S FIRST VISIT TO THE "OLE
ROLLY."

"Its a bad day when a young preecher tries to tawk like his Elder. He looses his inderviduality and stunts himself."—*Bildad Akers.*

CHAPTER III.

A rap at the door, a few noisy footfalls, and then was heard the sound of the clerk's voice as she asked if she "could carry a message to the editor."

"No message for me, gal; I'll see the edditor myself. Whar's Ivry?" were the brusque, determined words of the intruder.

Going into the outer office I stood face to face with Bildad Akers, the accepted friend of the thirty-five thousand readers of the Advocate. I had met him once or twice before and there was no difficulty on my part in recognizing him.

There was a semi-sinister look on his rugged face as he glanced slowly at the ceiling and then at every article of furniture in the office. But the ice in him thawed as he placed his number nine foot on the round of the chair in front of him and said in a neighborly way: "Well, Brother Ivry, I'm here at last. I have been mindin' to drop in fer a long time—ever sence I shuck your paw at the meetin'."

"Yes, Brother Akers, glad to see you," I said. "What is the news down about Ebenezer?"

But before the question could be answered I asked another, which had been on my mind for

some time: "Why in the world did you stop writing for the Advocate? You used to give us some good letters, and your friends have been wondering at your not writing any more.

In answer to these words, Bildad spat in the waste basket, squared his great shoulders, pursed his lips oracularly, and, sitting more erect, said in a kind of meditative way:

"I kinder knowed, Brother Ivry, that you never knowed about my bein' in the bresh endurin' of the last year or so. It was in the county paper, but they put it twixt Jim Scalds advertisements bout mules that he got sot in the colyums the edittor writes, and ef I hadn't been lookin' fer it I wouldn't a seed it myself. Yes, I've bin in the bresh; rheumatiz for over twelve months; Lizy fightin' the yaller janders; the childern gone, and nobody to write; that tells the tale. I want able, but I thought I'd run up to Rolly a day or so any way, rheumatiz or no rheumatiz." Here Bildad looked at me with reproachful eyes.

He then proceeded to tell me that he hadn't come to look in on the Legislature. It was evident that he had given the marble heart to the Legislature. It was not because he had been ordered down from the "loft" two years ago, but because he had been rash enough to run for the

nomination last fall and get beaten. I saw that this sad culmination of his political hopes had soured him against anything that would remind him of his mishap. By the way, that was his first and his last experience in politics.

"No," said Bildad, "I didn't go to no Legislatur last night. I went to pr'ar meetin'. I reck-in that was what it was. I hearn somebody at the door call it "pr'ar sarvice." But I like the ole name 'pr'ar meetin'. Methodists is gittin' too many hifalutin' names to suit an ole field hand like me."

Bildad paused here, as if unwilling to say anything more about the prayer meeting. But I wished to know what impression it had made, so I said: "Well, what did you think of it?"

"I liked the preecher," said Bildad. "He had somethin' good to say, an he said it like he meant it. I liked the music, tho I caint say pianner music sets well on my stummick, tho I sorter hanker in the fall arter a steam pianny. Maybe its bekase I'm so useter Ike Tinshaw's tunin'-fork. I liked the crowd—what there was of it. It minded me of the scholars that was left in Sam Perkins's school the day most of 'em run off and played April fool. I couldn't holp thinkin' while the preecher was talkin' why peopple in the big towns

dont go to pr'ar meetin' like they do in leetle towns and in the kentry."

"But do you know," he continued, "that my sperrits riz toward the hind eend of the meetin' when I seed nice lookin' people a'comin' in. I did think that they mout a looked a little shamed fer comin' in so late, but then I thought that it was a purty sight to see them city Methodists comin' in late ruther than miss the meetin'? Eudurin' the last few minutes, they jest piled in, and I'm blest, Brother Ivry, ef the house wasn't as full as a tick in August when the preecher prayed the bennydickshun. Bless my life! I thought, what furrin fan-dangled way is this, anyway, of people pilin' in jest to hear the bennydickshun? But then I said to myself, 'They've at least come out on the Lord's side ,and they seem so peart and slick diked out in their Sundy close. They all peared happy to hear the last pianner note and the bennydickshun. The thought made me feel good, and I reckin I was too hefty with my voice when they sung the doxerology, for a sollum, peaked lookin' man I tuck to be a stewart looked cross-eyed at me."

Here Bildad called for a drink of water, and, clearing his throat, he continued in a dejected tone, after having looked around to see if any one

else was listening. “ ‘Twixt you and me, Brother Ivry, I sloped back to my boardin’ house with the wust taste in my mouth, and its thar yit. Them peopple hadn’t come out to pr’ar meetin’ at tall. They had come out to a consert that had been orated to begin right arter the bennydickshun. Then it seemed to me that the reason them late comin’ Methodists looked so peart was bekase they had timed the thing so well that they succeeded in missin’ nearly the whole meetin’ without losin’ the fust pianner note of the consert. Thinks I to myself as I left the church without stayin’ for the consert, is this the way city Methodists does? Why, sich a thing as that would bust ole Ebenezer wide open. Why don’t they bollish pr’ar meetins’ in towns, Brother Ivry? They need a church Ward Bill. It seems to me the stewarts is wastin’ a heap of lights and sich on pore leetle dyin’ crowds.”

I told Bildad it would never do for the church to give up the prayer-meeting, that it is the pulse of the church, and that those who regularly go to prayer meeting help to keep alive the fire in the spiritual furnace.

“Then,” said Bildad, “ef the pr’ar meetin’ is the pulse of church, doctors is needed mighty bad in a sight of towns and cities, and ef them who

go regular are to keep the fire burnin' in the furnis, they ought to be turned off for havin nothin' to do, for thar's mighty leetle fire to keep in some places and in a heap of places the bilers has busted. Yes, Brother Ivry, I raly think that pr'ar meetins' in some towns orter be bollished."

"What's the use," he continued, "to burn all them lights, and heat up them furnises, and pay a sextant to light and warm up empty rooms? Don't you know that no school in the land could run when nearly all the scholars are off fishin'? Don't you know no factory could run when nearly all the workers are settin' in their homes? Don't you know no business in the world could run on them princerples? Then, how kin you expect a church to run when nearly all the members don't think enough of a meetin' like the pr'ar meetin' to go to it? The members can go to everything else. Then, to think them Methodists looked so proud when they scrouged in at the hind eend of a pra'r meetin' to git in at the front eend of a consert. What's the world comin' to, Brother Ivry?"

I took Bildad in hand and weakly tried to reason him out of his pessimism and revolutionary views, but to no avail. He paid his subscription, called for his garden seed, told me good-

bye, and left to attend to some errands. But the look on his face told me that he still strongly believed that "in most big towns" they ought to abolish the prayer meeting as something that costs more than it comes to.



AN INTERVIEW WITH BILDAD AKERS
ON A TRAIN.

"Ef the pra'r meetin' is the pulse of the church, doc-
tors is needed mighty bad in a sight of touns an' cities."

—Bildad Akers.

CHAPTER IV.

The train from Raleigh had gotten well under way, and, comfortably seated, I was reading the morning paper, when I heard a familiar voice several seats behind me. It was a deep, rolling, positive voice, which betokened the strong personality of its owner. I turned and saw our old friend Bildad Akers earnestly remonstrating with the patient non-plussed conductor. The former held in his hand a piece of red card board. I took in the situation at once. Bildad had resented the placing of the lurid slip in his hat band, and the conductor was trying to explain the use of the slip. But Bildad proved unteachable, and the conductor went down the aisle with these bass words following him: "Now, skeet on friend. Ax me no questions and I wont tell you no lies." The exact pertinence of the words I could not determine.

Of course, I hurried back to our old friend. The imperturbability of this personage denied a charge of previous excitement. I grasped his hand and expressed my pleasure in meeting him, and that so unexpectedly.

"I've jest left my married darter's home in town," said Bildad. "I went last Wensdy. Lizy

lowed that I was needin' another change. I am most too old to work in the field much, and when I looked at cotton roots twistin' and more grass growin' at night than could be killed in a day, I got so blue that it seemed I had a misry all over, and Lizy and the hands said: 'Jest git right off. We'll take care of things.' Well, I've seed the day when the whole pack couldn't a druv me off, but I'm not so peart as I was in my heftier days, and I thought maybe a few days at Sallie's, her that married Jeems Stillman, you know, might drive the misry from my mind and the rheumatiz from my jints. So I went over to Rolly. I didn't like to stay in town much, but I enjoyed myself and feel pearter than I have sence Chrismas."

I ventured to ask Bildad if he had found any trouble with the prayer meeting in town. He evidently remembered the experience he had with the prayer meeting some time ago, for a look of mingled amusement and vexation passed over his countenance. He hunched himself down in his seat and planted his knees against the seat in front, tilting the top forward in a way to disturb the occupant. He raised the car window so that generous draughts of dust poured through. He looked rather shamefacedly and questioningly

at the piece of red card board which he had been holding in his hand, and then let it flutter away with the wind. He expectorated violently through the window and began as follows:

"Well, Brother Ivry, I will tell you. I don't know as I orter, for you'll go and print it. I don't mind that so much, but you make me use bad grammar. I stood head in my class in grammar and parsed down a whole drove wunce at Banks School house. But I'll tell you. I didn't go to pra'r meetin' this time. But I went to church a Sunday. I know our pastur in town. Have knowed him sence he was a boy. He got his licens at our quarterly. He has done well. I broke him at once from a bad habit he tuck up—that of tryin' to tawk with his voice like the Elder. Its a bad day when a young preecher tries to tawk like his Elder. He looses his inderviduality and stunts himself. My preecher has always seemed to think a sight of me, and when I met him tother day, I seed that a city apintment hasn't spiled him. He tuk me in a store and giv me a drink of fizz—he called it a fosfit lemon, or some-thin' of the kind, and then interduced me to Captain White, his head stewart. No, Jeems is all-right or he wouldn't have made so all fired much of an old lighterd knot like me."

"How did you like the sermon?" I here interjected.

"They didn't want me to go to the church," was the reply. "You see I got up arly Sundy mornin' and walked over town, it seemed to me. I looked at a sight of fine hogs in the outskerts of town, and after brekfust, Sallie—that's my darter—said, 'Father, I want you to go to the Piscopal Church today. I want to show you the finest people in town, and I want you to hear jest a lovely sarvice with the finest kind of music.'" I turned to Sally and said, 'Sally Akers, I brung you up a Methodist, and you are a Methodist of the old breed now. What's this talk I hear of your throwin' away your religun and runnin' arter lovely sarvices, and finery and fuss, and feathers, and sich?' Now, I hope you've got grit enough to stand by your religun and raisin'. Sally had bin tryin' to get into siety, and I knowd it, and she had got her feelin's singed some, but it didnt fase her, I'm sorry to say. She looked so shamed that I didn't ax her any more questions, but I said: 'Sally Akers, your old dad is a Methodist and he's goin to stand by his guns tell he draps. He's agwine to his own church jest like the Piscopals go to their'n. I never hearn tell of them leavin' their chürch sarvices to go to other preachin' places."

"So I went, and Sally and her man went with me to hear Jeems. They set furder behind than me. I tuck the very front eend-bench or pues as they call em. All the front-eend benches was as empty as a corn crib in July. I seed the people was lookin' cross-eyed at me. Says I, 'All them benches are resarved. I must git furder back. I took a seat by Ike Payne who I useter know down in Painter township. I noticed them front-eend benches was empty endurin' the whole service, and I said to Ike, 'The peopple them seats was resarved fer must have went to the Piscopal Church to-day.' Ike jest smiled and didn't say nothin'."

"How did you like the sermon?" I asked.

"Brother Ivry, I never critercise a rale sarmont. I never hearn none so pore that I didn't git some good out of it. There was one brother who come to my naborhood once that the peopple wouldn't go to hear. They said he didn't have no d'livery. This was so, and when I hearn him he didn't have nothin' to d'liver. But all the same, I managed to git some good out of him."

"Jeem's sarmont was good. He preeched it like a lawyer tryin' to tawk to a jewry. But the whole thing wasn't balanced right. You know what I mean. The whole thing minded me of a

little ole kite that Sally's nabor's boys was tryin' to fly. The kite was not much bigger'n your hand and thar was about 100 yards of tail flutterin'. It wouldn't fly, of course."

"Why, Brother Akers, what do you mean?" said I.

"Why, the sarmont was only twenty-two minnits long and tother sarvices was fifty minnits. Now thar was too much tail, that was all. I believe in the sarmont bein' the main thing. When it's all tail it won't fly, that's all. I've got no objection to the 'postles creed, the galory, the responsible readin' and so forth, jest so the sarmont is the main thing. They say that they've got to make the sarmont short in order to have all these fixins'. Well, ef that's so, let's bust up the fixins' and have no galories and sich. These fixin's and trimmin's is ruinin' the preechin' these days. I couldn't sense the whole thing, but I'm not sayin' anything ferninst the service any congregation wants to use, but it made me mad as fire to hear Sally say that Methodists was patternin' after the Piscopals, and that the Piscopals have a perfectly lovely sarvice. Preechin's is the thing that's gwine to save the world.

"Now, thar was another thing that riled me," continued Bildad. "Settin' on the piazza in the

evenin' I hearn some young shavers jest gittin' out of short dresses and knee britches talkin' about the sarmont in the mornin'. They said it was raly too long, and that it made them narvous to hear a sarmont over twenty minnits long (Jeems had preeched about twenty-two minnits.) They said that the preacher was ruinin' his repytashun by preachin' so long. I jest felt kinder sick in my stummick on hearin' such talk and I _____."

But here the porter called Bildad's station, and the conversation ceased, much to my regret, for I felt that Bildad was getting to something very interesting. So I bade him goodbye. He left the car, sending back through the doorway this rumbling exhortation: "Brother Ivry, be shore to stick my name on the left hand side of the Advocate instid of the right. I like it that way better."

BILDAD AKERS AND STREET PREACHING.

"Other churches air huntin' fer the meat the Methodists have been gittin fat on, while the Methodists air strainin' with all their might to make other churches fergit that Methodists ever et sich meat."—*Bildad Akers.*

CHAPTER V.

A flaring red torch and the sound of an earnest voice issuing from the centre of a crowd congested just outside of the curbing and flowing in ragged waves over the sidewalk told me that the street preacher was at work. I was hurrying by to finish in the office a task which allowed no delay, when a deep bass "amen!" smote my ears. I stopped and looked over the crowd for the owner of that voice which I would recognize in the South Sea Islands. A second "amen!" enabled me to locate the voice in front of the wagon on which the singers sat and the preacher stood. There was our old friend, Bildad Akers, with glistening eyes and folded arms, drinking in with a camp-meeting eagerness the raucous exhortation of the excited preacher.

I concluded to wait until the conclusion of the service, for I never miss an opportunity to meet Bildad Akers when he comes to town. I had only a short time to wait, however, for the service was about over. After the benediction I passed through the scattering crowd and warmly greeted our old friend.

All the warmth of Bildad's salutations is in his handshake. It is never in his expression,

voice, or manner. He is a perfect stranger to effusiveness and to many appears cold and constrained. After shaking hands with me, he kindly introduced "Edditor Ivry" to his friend, a member of the police who had volunteered to pilot his rural acquaintance to the northern part of town.

It took me only a few minutes to relieve the officer of his charge. I invited Bildad to the office with a view to getting his ideas on the subject of street preaching. He ventured the statement that he wasn't feeling very "peart" and that he didn't "care ef he did go down and set a hour or two."

I gave him a seat in the best chair. He looked rather contemptuously, I thought, at the pot of growing ferns right under Longpre's masterpiece, representing the Queen of the Roses. The buzz of the electric fan seemed to disturb him, and his remark, that he would rather "sweat" in the old fashioned way than be bothered with these "new-fangled things," induced me to stop the fan.

"Well, Brother Akers," I ventured, "how is it that you are found here in Raleigh actually listening to the preaching in the street just as if there were not plenty of churches for you?"

At this Bildad, straightened up and shot a look of reproachful defiance at me.

"Ef you want to know," he said, "why I'm in Rolly to-night, I will say I'm jest layin' over. I've jest come from my darters and I mus hide out from here gin nine o'clock in the mornin', 'Bout street preechin', I 'low I've got a right to lissen to a sarmont wharever I kin. What have you ferninst street preachin'?" Again the reproachful defiance shone in his eyes.

"Brother Bildad, don't you think it is a little compromising to your dignity as an official of the great Methodist Church to be found in such a promiscuous crowd, lending your influence to irregular preaching?"

Here Bildad went to the window and expectorated, leaving me in dread lest some irate be-sprinkled pedestrian should make us a visit. Then he hitched up his chair a little nearer to me, and, looking at me straight in the eyes, said, "Brother Ivry, I'm a site more surprised to hear sich a question from you than you are to fine me lined up with a street preacher. The very idee of a Methdis' puttin' on ars and lookin' down on street preachin'. Why, Methdism—I larned it long ago—was brought up on the streets and in the field. My book tells me that

the fust preachers had to take the streets and fields to git their crowds. They had no meetin' houses to preach in. It makes me sick, Brother Ivry, every time I go to town to hear Methodists who still smell of camp-meetin' straw tryin' to act and talk so proper, and make peopple believe that have not knowd anything scusin' ristocracy, sassiety, fine meetin' houses, and other sich fixins. We are scootin' a mile a minnit furder from the rock which we were hewed from and evry mile we go we shed a sight of speritual power."

Receiving no reply from me, Bildad continued: "Wasn't them peopple that was holdin' that meetin' to-night Baptises? The Baptises and Presbyteruns are goin' it hefty in the street preechin' bisness. I seed in the Advocate that the Presbyteruns put a sight of money in kiverin' one city with street preechers, and that the 'Piscopals which are furriners is ackshally tryin' to git the Salvashun Army to jine em. Other churches air huntin' fer the meat the Methodists have been gittin' fat on, while Methodists are strainin' with all their might to make other churches fergit that Methodists ever et sich meat. Now aint that a sight to make a angel weep on his harp?"

"But, Brother Akers," I interposed, "haven't we churches to preach in? When we spend so much money to build these churches, should we not use them, and when we preach elsewhere, doesn't this give the people an excuse for staying away from church? If they don't come to church it is their own fault."

As Bildad was getting ready to answer these questions, I could see that "Brother Ivry's" stock was declining in the Akers market. When he did answer it was with a pitying smile, and he said:

"Brother Ivry, did you ever live in the kentry?"

I admitted that this privilege had never been mine.

"I thought so," he said, "or you'd never axed sich questions. When my hogs and stock git out and wont come back, I dont spend much time puttin' corn and slops in the pen and fodder and straw in the stalls, but I says to Jim and Jo, 'Go out and find them hogs and steers. Ef you caint drive 'em back toll 'em back.' Our Saviour when He was travelin' his sirkut didn't rent a little store room in the tempul and put over it a board sayin', 'This is the preachin' place,' but he went out atter the peopple and

preeched to em wharever he could spot em, and ackshally found some of the most onlikeliest of em in the reglar meetin' place itself . He was not ashamed to take a dry goods box for a pulpit and preech in the red light deestrict of Jeruslum."

"No, sir, ef I was a preecher of the Gospil I wouldn't hang around a leetle meetin' place and fling out gospel truck to a leetle passel of men and wimmen, but I'd mosey out and give Gospil truck to peopple whar I could nail em, and toll em to the meetin' place."

"It seems to me the way you see some Methodists do that they terpret the last noration of our Saviour this way: 'Go into all the world and preech the Gospil to every creacher everywhar scusin' in the streets and tother onregular places.' I kaint find any sich words in the Bible."

"What's the church fer nohow? My book tells me that its for savin' souls. Its not only a horsepittle but its an amberlance waggin. If it kaint git a pore wounded brat to come to the horsepittle it sends out the waggin arter him. That's my idee of relijun, and its pure bisness. How long do you think a big holesale shebang would last if it waited for customers to come to it and buy. Not six months. Yit the church

is spectin' to grow and flurish by settin' back on its jew claws and sayin' 'I've got the place for you. Come and be saved, and ef you don't come, may old Satin git the eendmost.'"

"Yes, Edditor Ivry, what I seed to-night is cordin' to my idee. I'm nothin' but a plain old rusty field hand from the kentry, but I kin see a thing or two, and my 'pinion is that us Meth-dists has got to git a hustle on us in our big places specially, not to be more proper and have better music and finer meetin' houses and sich fixins, but to see that the gospil is preeched to the peopple."

"Now, Bud, I must go. I've got to be at the quarterly day arter ter-morrer. I haint disappointed my elder sence I've been a stewart in ten year comin' next November. I may write the paper bout the quarterly and give you some of my idees bout it."

Here Bildad rose to his feet and stretched his mighty frame. There was evidently on his mind some question which he hardly knew how to formulate. I knew what it was, and, as he went out after having bidden me adieu, I said, "I agree with you Brother Akers, in all you have said. You have spoken my sentiments."

THE FIRST QUARTERLY MEETING OF
THE YEAR.

"When will peeples, specially stewarts of the church,
larn to make a clean square-cut sacrifice fer the Lord
without tryin' to grease their own waggins at the same
time?"—*Bildad Akers.*

CHAPTER VI.

It was a big fat envelope. It was addressed in a handwriting that sprawled over half the face of the envelope. The contents were seven pages of foolscap, sewed together end to end, with black thread. The writing had been done with a pencil. There were signs of numerous erasures; and the heavier black marks showed the emphasis of renewed determination "to git it right this time." The name "Bildad Akers," squeezed into the little patch of blank space at the lower right-hand corner of the last page, acted like magic in driving away the frown which settles on the editor's brow when he sees "bad copy." Hearing from Bildad is next to seeing him. So, clearing off the desk, I ripped the pages apart, numbered them, and, laying them in order before me, proceeded to decipher Bildad's hieroglyphics with all the enthusiasm characteristic of one who has found cuneiform inscriptions among ancient ruins.

But alas! after an hour's toiling I found that I could not get the article in literary shape. There were undecipherable parts. I could not tell whether a certain page was intended for the fifth or sixth. I was in a quandary. I could not throw such an article into the waste basket. To return

it would be like returning a child's gift. Besides, it showed here and there bright bits of gold gleaming in the fissures of disconnected sentences and misspelled words. So I concluded to give our honest rugged old philosopher a place on the editorial page and let him cry some of his best thought-wares from this advantageous position.

Bildad was redeeming his promise to send us a letter, telling of his first quarterly meeting. I will use his own language, as he is very sensitive as to changes in his verbiage and spelling. I have, however, eliminated many crudities in spelling and punctuation.

"I got up bright and arly, Brother Ivry, on last Satidy mornin' to tend the quarterly. The fack that it was the fust in the year didn't play any bones with me, for I've been a stewart forty year comin' next October, and I've missed only three quarterlies. I tuk it that when I was lected stewart, I was 'lected to be in my place. Ef I was one of these stewarts that dont never tend the quarterlies and other meetin's, I would fire in my resignashun. Sich stewarts is a bain to the church."

Here follow a few lines telling about the directions he gave his wife on starting, and the

fifteen miles between his house and the church where the "quarterly" was held. But I take up the thread at the end of the journey.

"Brother Ivry, I never seed so many at a quarterly before. Cap'n Hanks and Bose King was there. Jimmy Deeton was there. Jimmy had been church Confeareance scribe for ten year, and ef he had ever acted I disremember the time —but it was bekase thar had never been no Church Confeareance. Arter chattin' for a spell with the bretheren, I seed Jimmy ride off. I axed som'un whar he was goin'. Som'un said 'To the sale at Jink's store.' I sensed then what had fetched sich a big crowd. Tryin' to kill two sparrows with one rock. Mixin' religijn and bisness. The crowd must have seed disgust on my face. When will people, specially stewarts of the church, larn to make a clean square cut sacrifice for the Lord without tryin' to grease their own waggins at the same time? That feller Simon Maggut has been preechin' a fine sarmont to me endurin' all these yeers."

The sermon of the Presiding Elder was very acceptable to Bildad, who is truly a good judge of preaching. He designated the sermon as a "good old corn bread sarmont, made of water ground meal."

I will let Bildad tell about the Quarterly Conference in his own way:

"It was a little amusin' when the Elder arter the sarmont axed the bretheren 'bout when the quarterly should be helt. Cap'n Hanks and Bose King and others flew up like a kuvvy of patridges and said they had a little bisness to tend to gin 2 o'clock and they would like to have the quarterly helt right away. They raly wanted to git through in time for the sale at Jink's. But they didn't say so. Then without givin' us blowin' time, the quarterly was hooked up ready for travellin'.

I wuz settin' by the winder chattin' with Jeems Blacker, and I sed, 'Jeems, tell me one thing, Why does Cap'n Hanks and Bose King allus come hoppin' up at the fust quarterly every time, and the rest of the year make themselves scace as a ground hog in the winter time? Thar aint a sale so nigh a quarterly every time.' Jeems kinder sniggered an said, 'No, Bildad, them bretheren didn't come up here to-day count the sale at Jinks. They would have missed the sale count of the quarterly. You jest watch em when the preecher's lowance is fixed. I knowed all-ready, but I jest axed Jeems to see ef he could see through a holler log.'

On the third page I managed to make out Bildad's ideas as to the preacher's part in the fixing of his salary.

"Arter the roll was called, and the scribe had writ down the names, and the preacher had read his report about the Lege and Sunday-school and childern and sed that he didn't have no rit report about the church sence it was so nigh after con-fearance, and sed he couldn't give no figgers of last year's work sence the minnits hadn't been printed, and the Elder had giv him a reglar soakin' about not havin' his report and keepin' his own figgers with him, the Elder cleared his throte and axed what mount had bin estymayted fer the support of the preacher. Oh larnin' that no meetin' of the stewarts had been helt, he said they must fix up the matter afore he could go on. So the stewarts helt a kind of meetin' right jam in the middle of the quarterly. And right here old Brother Reems from the lower eend of the Sirkut riz and said he persumed the preecher would not like to stay in. Then I riz to my feet and said, Bretheren, I can't sense what this means. What does anyone want the preecher to go out fer? We aint gwine to hurt his feelin's. We aint gwine to buse his wife and chil-dern. We is jest gwine to tawk about what pay

he is goin' to git from us this year. Its his pay, and he has got a right to have a say so. - Ef he was gwine to work on your farm you would'nt tell him to go out to the well and then in a few minnits send out the boy and tell him arter considerin' the matter you had agreed to give him 50 sents a day and his board. No, you and him would fix the prise betwixt you and thar would be no goin' out to the well. I move you, that we let the preecher stay in and know what's gwine on when his bread and meat for the year is bein' fixed. They agreed to let him stay. They seed I had my dander up."

"We had a long argyment over what the preecher's pay should be. In that argyment Cap'n Hanks and Bose King showed what they come fer. They fit over it jest like two game roosters. They warmed up ferninst each other like two dogs on a cold day when they wus trying to rejuce the pay from \$700.00 to \$650.00. But when this went agin 'em and the pay was fixed at \$750 arter a speech I made, they went at each other, each one tryin' his levelest to keep his church's sessment down to the lowest notch. Cap'n Hanks wanted Bose's church to have a bigger sessment than his'n, and Bose wanted the sessment of Cap'n Hank's church to be bigger'n his'n. And

so it went on betwixt them two stewarts who allus tended the fust quarterly and no more endurin' the year jest bekase they paid the biggest quarterage at their church and they wanted to keep it down all they could. Brother Ivry, do write an eddytoral about keepin' sich skint flints in the Church as stewarts. They do nothin' but make the peeples mad when it comes to payin' the preecher."

Bildad said a good many other things which would make good reading. He said that when the question was asked the preacher did not know how many Advocates were taken on the charge, and that he had to make another speech in which he said that he hadn't heard the preacher mention the paper from the pulpit during the whole year, and wondered how the people could be expected to know anything about the church and get along without the church paper. But Bildad would be rejoiced, I know, to learn that we have very few preachers like his in the Conference.

I will give the last of the letter as well as I can make it out:

"Arter the quarterly was over, who should come up but Jimmy Deeton, his old hoss loaded down with old plows and shovels which he had bought for about 75 cents. He was jest frum the

sale. I axed him why he wasn't at the quarterly. He sed, 'I'm not a member.' 'You are a member,' I said. 'Aint you Church Confearence scribe?' 'Yes,' he said. 'Then,' I said, 'you are a member of the quarterly.' Jimmy said he didn't know it ef he was. Then I said, 'Jimmy, there are several things you need. You need a dis-sip-lin to tell you who belongs to a quarterly and your church paper to tell you when your quarterly is helt. You didn't know about the quarterly bein' helt to-day ontell you got mixed up with us here to-day on your way to the sail.' Jimmy then spoke of goin' with me. I tolle him I wasn't goin' home that night. I was goin' to stay thru preech-in' Sundy. That's my plan and has been for twenty yeer. This thing of stewarts goin' home on Satidy has almost broke up the Sundy half of a quarterly. I allus stay over and tell the other stewarts to do the same, no matter ef they are Sundy School Superintenders and hanker arter their wives and childern."

Bildad Akers is a Methodist of the fine golden type. He is not versed in the ways of the world. His trousers bag at the knees, and he has never yet learned to wear a cravat, much less tie one. He smashes grammar in his speech. His words are quaint and primitive. When it comes,

though, to making a record of hearts of gold and minds blessed with that rare learning called common sense; when it comes to grading men of strong faith, loyal consecration, and unswerving fidelity to Right, who are heroes all in the great charges on the spiritual and temporal battlefields of the church, I must place our old friend and philosopher among the first. He and those like him are the hope of the church. May his tribe increase.

Perhaps this tribute will serve to allay any disappointment that may arise within him when he fails to see all of his long letter in print. May our readers be as tolerant as he.

A REMEDY FOR A SICKLY PRAYER
MEETING.

"Any preecher who kin fill his meetin' house at pra'r-meetin' will walk round as a mighty peart preecher."—*Bildad Akers.*

CHAPTER VII.

Our old friend and philosopher, Bildad Akers, is fond of big gatherings, and he never misses an opportunity to see and hear the celebrated men of the country. I felt sure that the Bryan celebration in our city would bring Bildad from the retirement in which he seemingly had been hiding during the summer. But I hardly expected to see him in Raleigh a few days ahead of the celebration on Monday.

On Saturday afternoon he was in the office. He came in without knocking. He was without collar and coat except as he carried the latter on his arm and the former in the pocket of his coat. I could see a limp end sticking out. He returned my greeting with that composure which never deserts him except when he's standing in a crowd on the street. They say that he is a terrible joker when he feels that circumstances do not require him to maintain his dignity. To tell the truth, he is one of the men "who live by the side of the road." He has the human touch.

Flinging his coat on the safe in the outer office, and asking me to stop that "new fangled thing" which made him feel as he said "like he was at Jim Sikes' planin' mill," Bildad mopped

his perspiring face, sat down in the stenographer's chair, and fastened on me a look which plainly said, "I wonder what you are up to now?"

I first massaged his spirits with heartfelt interrogations as to his health and that of "Lizy," and the "childern" now somewhat scattered. The hard lines (they were on his face and not in his tender old heart) softened, and when he had edged his chair near the window through which to expectorate, I saw that he was ready for a good hour's stay with me. If he had ever felt any constraint in the presence of the editor, it had worn off long ago. I felt happy that Bildad considered me a friend.

Before I had a chance to draw him out on the purpose of his visit to Raleigh—a purpose with which I was already acquainted, he said:

"Brother Ivry, I went roun tother night to hear Galbert. I had been hearin' a sight of him and readin' of him in the Advocate, and I meandered round to pr'ar meetin' arter supper."

"Galbert?" I said; you mean "Galbraith."

"Didn't I say it," said Bildad. "I never hearn tell of your bein' deff. Galbert is the one I mean; old Brother Bernis Galbert's son."

"Well, I went round to hear Galbert at pra'r meetin'. I hadn't been thar sence they tacked

on a full house consert as a tail eend to a leetle two by fore pra'r meetin'. When I went in tother night, I seed the house was about full. The platform was kivered with boys and gerls in their Sundy close and the main audytorum was filled with peopple of all ages."

"I said to myself, 'Bildad, as shore as guns iurn, they are gwine to have the consert fust this time and pra'r meetin' arterward. You had better skedaddle and come back to be with the leetle pra'r meetin' crowd when its turn comes."

"But afore I could squirm Galbert had started a pra'r, and then the organ lady ground out on the pianny a reglar old-time meetin' tune. The Chairman of the board of stewarts had somethin' to say bout the fynances. Then they sung and prayed. Then the Sunday-skool superintender made a fine speech on his Sunday-skool. A lady had a heap to say about mishuns. A young man spoke on the Epworth Lege.

There was singin' and pra'r and pra'r and singin' and when the meetin' busted all them people felt good. I felt good myself. I seed that Galbert had not only got his crowd out to pra'r meetin but that he had had one of the best church confeareances I ever tended—and all that too on a Wensdy night. My friend Visuvious Moister

told me that it was allmost that good every Wensdy night. I said, 'Galbert'll do. Any preecher who kin fill his meetin' house at a pra'r meetin' will walk round as a mighty peart preecher.'"

"Brother Ivry, I'm goin to give you my idees about gittin' the people out to pra'r meetin'. You think maybe that I'm a rusty old back woodman and dont keep up much with town doins'. Well, thar's whar you drapped your eend of the log. I manage to keep my eyes skinned, and not for nothin' either. I know enough about town doin's to know that a leetle bit the onlikeliest job a town preecher has got is to git his flock out in the pra'r meetin' pastur."

"My fust pint is that a preecher must give his people somethin' when they git ter pra'r meetin'. It'll not do for the preecher to knock up arter supper a few pints on one of David's Sams and then try to dish em out as fried chickin to the people. Them people will know the difrunce. They knows the difrunce twixt sawdust and brown shoogar, and don't you ever forgit it. People kin gage to the minnit jist how much time a preecher spends on his little tawk. They will turn out of a Sunday bekase they haint got nothin' else to do or bekase they hanker to see their nabors, or bekase it is expected of em to

go to meetin' of a Sundy. But when it turns to gittin people out of a week night, you have got to promis to give em somethin'. Ef they don't git it they'll not go back, and the pra'r crowd must be made up of the piousest saints of the church."

"Why, old Jabe Baggart used to have the awfulest time gittin' a crowd at his corn shuckin's. The nabors had no trubble, but ole Jabe used to shuck his crowd tell nearly daylight bekase thar was so few of them. The matter was, old Jabe was so pizen stingy, he wouldn't haf feed his shuckers. Late rosen years and punkin custards was about all the grub they got. Do you wonder that his shuckin' crowd drapped down to almost nothin'? They wanted good grub and plenty of it arter they finished the pile. Thar is a heap of Jabe Baggarts mongst preechers tryin' to run pra'r meetin's that looks like a passel of peopple a-settin' up with a corps. And ef a preecher don't study and pray and do his allmity best at his pra'r meetin' the crowd wont be thar, bekase they know rashuns will be scant."

I here started to formulate my assent to the philosophical remarks of Bildad, but, with a significant gesture, he waved me into silence, and proceeded:

"My next pint is, Bud, that to have a full pra'r meetin' you've got to have a vriety—a mixtur. People git tired of good things sometimes when the're all of the same kind. There's nothin' peopple likes better than a change evry now and then. Even ef it is fer the wuss, the very change makes it intrustin'."

"I member one year, I disremember which, was a mighty blackberry year. My Lizy put up a heap of blackberries and that winter it was blackberry pie ontell I got lonesum. Thar's nothin' better than a blackberry pie, but blackberry pie evry day somehow or tother makes you sour on blackberries. So one day arter dinner, I said to Lizy, 'Lizy, you've knowed every sence we bunched rags that I haint never kicked ferninst the eatin' department of this here ranch. I ginerally eats what sets afore me. But dont you raly think you've went fur enuff in this blackberry pie bisness?'"

"Lizy said nothin', but next day it was dried apple pie. Now dried apple pie is a kind of God Forsaken grub. Wasn't it Shakeyourspere or some other high minded writer of potry which said:

" 'Of all the grub below the skies
The poorest is dried apple pies'?

"But do you know, Ivry, that that dried-apple

pie that day tasted like poun cake, jest bekase it was a change?"

"A preecher caint have the same thing at evry pra'r meetin'. The grub must change. The change may give porer grub, but bekase it is a change it loosens up the spiritual lites and mus-sels, and brings the peopple back to the trawf the next week."

At this juncture the foreman came to see about some copy, and Bildad's preaching was cut short. When the foreman left the office, Bildad had evidently closed his mouth on the prayer-meeting question, for not another word could I get from him on this subject.

We exchanged a few views on the weather and the price of cotton. Then Bildad, hitching his chair nearer to mine, proceeded to ask in a slightly subdued tone if I really thought that Mr. Roosevelt's new spelling had any chance of coming into general use? I expressed myself as believing that the whole thing was a kind of Tam-O-Shanter ride along the turnpike of orthogra-phy.

"I dont know," said Bildad, "what you mean by 'tammyshanter' and 'orthograffy,' but I'm fer this here kind of spellin', claws and hide. I'm a kind of captin' on the subject of spellin, and

evry thing to make people spell rite is the thing fer me. I looked over Mr. Roosyvell's list of words and I seed that I had been spellin' some of them words all the time jist like Mr. Roosyvell."

Bildad had evidently made out his visit. Rising to his feet, he yawned and said, "I've got to break bread with my old frien Charly McCullis to-night, so I mout as well be goin'. Our meetin' begins to-morrow comin a week, and I will send you a letter about it ef you spell my words jest like I spell 'em. Good-bye, Bud, and come out to the speakin' a Monday."

He slowly drew on his coat, and, collarless, and waving a great palm leaf fan he had picked up, he went down stairs to walk up street as an unterrified freeman of this great country.

A BEWILDERING BUT INTERESTING
LETTER.

"Hard times in the hart and not in the craps is what makes scant c'lections."—*Bildad Akers.*

CHAPTER VIII.

The personality of Bildad Akers exudes almost from a sealed envelope. When, looking through my mail, I came across an old-fashioned envelope, having a three-cent stamp pasted with starch on the left-hand corner, and containing an address written near the top to "Editor Ivry, Rolly Christian Advocate, Rolly, N. C." I, of course, knew that a letter from our old friend Bildad Akers lay before me. Yet, independently of the peculiarity of envelope, stamp, and address, I could have almost determined at a mere glance the identity of the writer.

It took me quite a while to read through the letter. Bildad's chirography is not so good as he thinks his spelling and grammar to be. The editor who fashioned into shape the wonderful and scrappy copy of Professor Teufelsdrockh, and gave us Sartor Resartus, never had on his hands a bigger job than mine when I essayed to read and resolve into editorial shape that marvellous letter of Bildad Akers. Yet it was a labor of love. I cannot publish the letter in its entirety. I can give only certain extracts.

Bildad evidently made an effort to explain to me why he wrote a letter instead of coming to

the office in person as he had been accustomed to do. I know this from the following:

"Brother Ivry, I dont pollygise for sendin' a letter. It was sot in my mind to go to Rolly and see you and tell of our meetin' and sich jest like I promussed. I done my best, but here I am with pen in hand drappin' you a few lines and hopin' as how you are peart and sassy and enjyin' the same blessin'."

"I raly thought I would git to the Fair. I hate to miss a fair. I love to see the hogs and hosses, and there is only one man who enjys 'em more and that is my old friend Dee Long, who was once preserdent of the fare. But bout at that identycle time a misery come in my jints and I couldn't moove a wheel. I mean jest afore the fair."

"I don't know ef I ort to tell you, but I did think of goin' up on sircus day, two weeks ago a comin' of a Wensdy. Of course I didnt low to go in. But I have all the same a kind of hankerin' arter sircusses. I love hosses and animals and brass bands. I love a steam pianny. I love crouds. But do you know, Ivry, that Lizy almost sprung a fit when I lowed one day I would go up to Rolly on Wensdy even ef it was sircus day. She blazed out at me in a kind of vishus

way, for Lizy never quarrels: "You're a purty site, Bildad Akers, to make a sircus an excuse for bein' in that sircus crowd. You're a butifull yooth to be thinkin' about them things at your age. Edittor Ivry will be shore to find it out, and how will you feel when all your friends see in the Advocate that Bildad Akers was in Rolly of a Wensdy, and p'raps he went to the sirkus, for he made himself scace about the offis? Now, how does that tech you, Bildad?" It teched me nuff to keep me at home, and thats how I come to be writin' this letter with my rumatiz hand."

The great event of the year with Bildad Akers is the "big meetin'." His heart is wrapped up in his church and his preacher, and a year without a "big meetin'" at his church would be as strange to him as a year without a spring or summer. He went on to say.

"Our big meetin' has come and went. I was a leetle riled at fust. The thing didn't go off to suit my noshuns of sich things. We had meetin' twice a day, with dinner flung in betwixt. The weather was all right and the preecher was in good kilter, but somehow the folks didn't turn out. Then the preecher begun to rake 'em up and down the back—the very fokes that had

did their duty. What makes preechers do this ennyhow? Well, the thing went on till Chusedy and thar had bin only one morner and he was Jim Tarrover, who goes to evry meetin' as reglur as he goes to cote to get on the jury. Jim's a kinder profeshional morner. He thinks he ort to go up to the alter wunce to pay for the vittels he et betwixt sarmonts."

"Well, the thing went on. The preecher fussed. He kept rakin' that old currycome up and down their backs. Ole man Pete Hoover and Ben Smith sot and seemed to try to see which could squirt terbacker juce the furdest outer the winder. Chuseday evenin' thar wasnt a morner. Jim Tarrover had throwed up his job. I beleeve he was foundered. He snored like he was. The people, what thar was of em, looked diskuraged. I seed the thing was about to sizzle out, and jest afore the bennydicshun I riz up in meetin', I did. I ketched the eye of the preecher and I dejected a few remarks, as Jim Moon says."

"Lizy looked at me like I was outer my head, but I didn't never bawk. I didn't bat a eye nuthier. I said: "My frends and bretherin', a meetin' is a mighty simple thing to run, not 'lowin' as how I know how to run one more'n the preecher.

A meetin's jest like anything else that's got

to be run with hed work. ·God throo His Sperrit dishes out the power, but He sartinly expects the peopple to pray and work and do a site of hed work. I've sot here day arter day and its come to me that we've all been backard, not in preechin' and singin' and prayin', but in good old hed work. All of us needs more common sense, reglar old stable yard sense. Brother preecher, you need it the same as the ballance of us. You've bin rakin' us up and down the back and not a smile has lit your face endurin' all your preechin'."

"Then thar is too many rashuns et on them grounds out thar. Big dinners has killed a site of meetins'. Why, I can look around me and kin count a duzzen men who is as scant of fisical git up and git as a water logged dawg. You're all jest lissen at Jim Tarrover a snorin' over thar same as a fattened hog who has et too much. Whar fine grub abounds the Sperrit hasn't got haf a chance, and grace much less abounds. How kin peopple have a proper consarn for souls when they have in 'em haf a watermillion a peace? Its the flesh lustin' ferninst the Sperrit as shore as you are borned. Its not as much the pride of the eye by a bloomin' sight as the pride of the stummick."

"By this time even Jim Tarrover had got up, and all the people was listenin'. Then I said:

'Brethren, we've begun tootin' at the wong eend of the horn. We've bin fishin' for the out-breakin' sinners and they aint here. Lets fish for some of these hongry saints who is more richer in full ponches than in Sperrit-filled hearts. Thar's two of them over thar who aint spoke to each other endurin' the meetin'. Thar's a man back thar who has led in pra'r and they know down at the store that he'd give a feller the thick eend of the log in a trade quick'ern a nigger will rob a hen roost. I sot by a man yistiddy who counts himself a piller and his breth smelt as strong of whiskey as the bar'l itself. You wunder why we dont have the crowds. Why, ef it was raly knowed that one of them saints had raly confest and come out fair and squair fer the Lord, the people would come here, ef fer nothin' else to see how the convarted saints look on a decent stummick."

"Then some of you brethren pray too long. Two of you seemed to be havin a match game of it yistiddy, each seein' as how he could out pray the other. Rastle in pra'r with old Marster and not with your feller man. Now, bretheren, let's begin at the right eend. Lets do a leetle knee work rite now and here and git ourselves rite. I begun my tawk with the preecher, and I want

him to begin now by leadin' us all in pra'r to the eend that not a sinner of us leave this ontell we've made it up with God."

"Well, Brother Ivry, thar was some confeshuns made at that sarvis. Some got raly happy. Ebenezer Price's boy was convarted. The news spread, and when the last day of the meetin' come, the church couldn't hold all the people. Thar was twenty jiners at the meetin', and I am glad. You know I am."

Bildad writes for half a page about neighborhood affairs, which I omit. I must reproduce, though, what he writes about his preacher.

"Our last quarterly will be helt next week. I dont know how we're goin' to come out. Old Ebenezer has paid out in full. This is the fust year I haint had to dubble my sessment to pull the church throo. A good meetin' holps a steward more in electin' the church dews' than all the fifteen sent cotton in the world. Hard times in the hart and not in the craps is what makes scant 'lections. I've lived many a year in these diggin's, but I've never saw sich hard times that a good meetin' couldn't pull preecher and peopple throo."

"I love my preecher. I dont know whether he's comin' back to us or not. I have an idee

that he would do jest the kind of work that is needed on a sartin big stashun I know of. He needs more range for his gun. It seems to me that it's mighty hard for feeld hand preechers to brake into high places, and arter a high place preecher has roosted high for a while its mighty hard to get the Cabbynet to get him off. Now, I've got a good noshun to go to Rocky Mount and see Bishop Willson and tell him that old Bildad Akers thinks that more of our men in the woods should have a chance in the clearins'. Ef more of our men in the woods was to swap with men in the clearin's, the clearin' peopple would have better preechin' and the woods peopple would have better preechin'. Now, Brother Ivry, you would call this a parryfox, but it has a site of truth in it. I think thar ort to be a mighty shuf-flin' round. They got David from the sheepfold."

But my space has run short and I must forbear, with the invitation to Bildad to write again. If I cannot publish his whole letter, I will, at least, notice parts of it on the first page of the paper.

BILDAD GOES TO COMMENCEMENT.

"Well, son, Proverdence is tryin' the grit of we pore farmers these days. Craps is backard, mighty backard. When I think about it, tho, I jest plunk down my thoughts on all the forrerd yeers we have had, and thank Ole Marster that thar are more to come."—*Bildad Akers.*

CHAPTER IX.

There are some little sections in Bildad Akers' nature which I have never been able to explore. He is not a credulous being. No one is so quick as he to detect the false note in another. Yet Bildad is deluded into believing that his spelling is at par. He claims no special knowledge of grammar, but he does not relish an adverse criticism of his spelling.

An old-fashioned personality, even boasting at times of moss, he manages to have a modern outlook on life. He is a lively number in a decorous way among the boys. Yet this question comes in to perplex me: Why does Bildad, with his high appreciation of epistolary experience, persist in using an old goose quill, mere scraps of paper, and the palest of pale ink, when he writes to the Advocate? His letters, written on stationery of divers hues and sizes and shapes, shame even Professor Teufelsdrockh.

It is a labor to decipher his cryptographic handwriting. I do not publish his letters exactly as they are received and written. The best I can do is to string their fragments together on a kind of editorial string.

This I do with his last letter received a few

days ago. He begins by apologizing for his long silence, saying that it is the first letter he has "writ sence Confear-ance." He alludes in a reminiscential way to certain experiences at Rocky Mount, not forgetting to mention the few votes which he received for the editorship. Bildad actually rolls that memory as a "sweet morsel under his tongue." Well, so be it. If we were to see things as they really are, a great deal of life's glamour would be gone. Let memory have her fads and follies. The stern things that are suffice to drive away the ultra-sentimental which truly deceives and weakens.

What Bildad has to say in connection with the subject of the weather is really pertinent and practical. What more practical subject could be discussed just now? It is refreshing to note that his words have no pessimistic ring, as is evident in the following extract:

"Well, son, Proverdence is tryin' the grit of we pore farmers these days. Craps is backard, mighty backard. Corn, cotton and sich looks the same to me as pore leetle childern which is tryin' to keep from bein hongry and cold. When I think about it, tho, I jest plunk my thoughts down on all the forrerd yeers we have had, and thank ole Marster that thar are more to come. Last yeer was the forrerdest yeer, to be shore."

"I was jest come in from drappin' corn tother day and was settin' on a log nigh the spring when ole Peter McGillis come from his pastur. He sot down side o' me and I seed at once that he was in the dumps. His lights, I know, was as blew as a huckleberry. The blew run in streeks thru his tawk. If a sanktyfied Methodist stewart ever come nigh to cussin' the weather, Pete was the feller. I tole him he had orter be shamed of himself. I axed him ef he had ever starved to death. He almost wanted to make me believe he had on severial casions enjide that speriance but I knowed better. I axed him ef he had ever seed a yeer without some kind o' craps? He got to tawkin about 1816, and I tole him he hadn't never seed that yeer. I said, 'Pete you ole grasin' skin-flint, you had orter to be shamed of yerself. You're one of the stripe which God has been so good to that they want to take all that He is got and more. You are like a hog who chomps his corn all rite as long as the yeers are throwed to him, but ef he has to wait a leetle, why then he hollers. Why, Pete, you hev got the same kind of faith as a hog. Can't you trust in Proverdence enough to believe that the corn'll be throwed in good time. Cheer up, ole man, and go to work like me. This is

the third time I've drapped this corn. I'm goin' to do my part, and I jest know that Proverdence will do his'n."

"No, brother," Bildad continued, "its goin' to take a sight more'n onlikely wether to turn my lites blew and make me slip my hold on God."

"I allers fout the idee of our Sundy-scool shettin' up arter the big meetin' in the fall and not openin' ontell spring, or jest afore the summer meetin's. But it dont do no good. The superintender is allers agin me. He sez evergreen scools is all right when peeples is used to havin' of 'em, but they never knowed sich a thing at our meetin' house, and its bad to have a suddent change. It's nothin' but Simon-pure laziness and no countness with our scool as I'll show you.

You know them hot days in March? Well, it was sartinly sizzlin' for the sholeder of the yeer down in these parts. The trees begun to bud, and the gals put on their white frocks, and Ike Smith got out his straw hat which he bawt in Rolly endurin' the Fusion Campane. It did look like summer time, and afore I knowed it, they had lowed it was time to start Sunday-scool agin. They helt scool two Sundys, and I had got a peart class. Well, the next Sundy was cold and drizzly, then come them frosty nights, and

shore as guns iurn, the very next Sundy they lowed they had tempted Proverdence by startin' the scool afore its time, an they tuk a vote not to start the scool ontell they could have rale ole summer weather. Did you ever hear tell o' sich doins'? How is ole Marster goin' to bless sich hardheaded, lazy, no-count passel of Sunday-scoolers? Tother day, a thinkin' bout it, I jest made up my mind that scool is goin' to run all next winter ef I've got to tromp snow every Sundy."

It was no surprise to me when I learned that Bildad had attended the commencement of Trinity College. He feels a deep interest in his church and her every enterprise and institution. He writes as follows:

"Lizy got to rarin' last Mondy when she seed me workin' with my ole carpet bag, and a dustin' up in gineral; fer I sed to her, 'Lizy, I'm goin' to the exbition at Trinity College. I believe they call 'em Commencements.' She allowed I'd be a purty sight up thar among them big bugs."

"But I said, 'Lizy, Trinity scool is an insti-tooshun of my church. I aint no bennyfactur, I aint no trusty, but that scool belongs to me as much as to any of them fellers. I aint got no use for any Methodist which dont show no in-

trust in his own property, and I'm agwine to Durham to see what they are doin'?"

"But I went and I aint sorry a bit. They treated me like I was a shore enuff bennyfactor or a trusty or some feller from the north. I enjide evry minit I was thar. I kept my eyes skinned, too. I seed everything run as smooth as an otter slide. One man of them fellers of the teachin' squod tended to one thing and another tended to another. There wasn't no hitch. They've got the properest congregations you ever seed. One night them electrissity lites blowed out and everything was as black as a swamp at midnight. But the meetin' went right on. They didn't strike no matches and it peared as ef the people was shamed even to breathe out loud. Then when Jedge Bruin was makin' his speech he spoke so low that them that was settin' in the rare eend couldn't hear. But they didn't get onrestless, but sot with their eyes glued on the Jedge."

"I was mighty glad to hear Mr. Eastgit, the head of the trustys, tell of the number of pore boys the college is holpin'. The college has giv away \$30,000 in eddication in the last ten years. I was mighty glad to meet Mr. Eastgit. They say he's got a kind of bunkin place all by hisself

near his town. Now, I call that a sizzlin shame. Why don't he git married and carry some good oman thar to his house in the woods. I saw the Preserdent. He joked me like I was a kid, and there aint nothin' hifalutin' about him. What I seed showed me that he was tendin' to his patch mighty well."

"I hearn the boys speak. I noticed that when I would meet one on the scool yard he would raise his hat to me. It made me feel like they was trained right. But I tell you, I didn't like them pigeon taled cotes they wore in the pulpitt they spoke from. Sumhow it didn't jest set rite in my mind. I've seed em before and it always make me think that them that wears 'em has been raned on. Did you ever see a rooster in the rane? Sich fixins is too new for Bildad Akers."

A good deal more followed about the Commencement. Bildad was evidently enthusiastic over what he saw at the "scool." He is a strong believer in his College, and wants every "stew-art" to go and see for himself.

But I will have to dismiss for the present our old philosopher in the hope that soon we may have the pleasure of seeing his face in the office.

AN OCTOBER LETTER.

"You preechers tawk a heap 'bout stringin' your fish
as soon as you ketch 'em, but what's the good of stringin'
'em unless you kin tote 'em home and use 'em?"—*Bildad
Akers.*

CHAPTER X.

The other day I fell into a train of thought which came to a dead-stop in the face of the wondering why I had neither seen nor heard from Bildad Akers in such a long time. It was not long before there lay on my desk the following letter, reproduced just as it was written, with the exception of a few changes in spelling and punctuation:

OCTOBER IN THE YEER OF THE LORD.

Rolly, N. C. Deer Brother

A cupple of weeks sence I was settin' on the back steps a' readin' of the Advocate when I come to Brother Tomas's poum. I read it thru and thru, and then thru agin. I called Lizy and I says, "Lizy, here's potry what is potry. Ole Brother Tomas has got a hart in him. I dont like his meeter and some of his words, but he drives at a pint which are intrustin' to ev'ry steward which I have been endeavorin' to be in the sight of Ole Marster and men fer nigh on to menny years." Lizy says, "Good sakes, man, what are you drivin' at?" I says, "Lizy, this poum means doin' sumthin' fer the preecher—sendin' him to Jeemstown exhibishun. Yes, Brother Tomas is a poet which will do to stand

up against. This Sharlit Observer caint set up any of its poums ferninst it in a thousand yeer or less, or perhaps more, jest as you take it."

Well, in less'n a leetle I had saw some of the white sheep of our preech'rs flock and I hed drawd enuff money to send our preecher to Jeemstown, and, as I felt that wad in my breast pocket, I said to myself—‘Bildad, it was dead eesy.’ Why in the name of all which consarns preechers and sich doesn’t all the peeples in the Confeareance do the same by their preecher? This wad felt as good as that plaster when Lizy was a drawin’ the pane out o’ my chist last winter.

The comin’ Saddy when the hands had nocked off work and I was settin’ on the porch readin’ the Advocate, I seed our preecher drivin’ up the lane. I let him lite afore I moved from my cheer. Then I went out and said, “Wont you lite?” He sed I am alreddy lit. I laffed and sed, “so ye air.” By this time he had unhooked. I never did like to see a preecher stand by and see a mail or feemail lovin’ brother hook up or unhook his own crittur—that is which I mean to say—the preecher’s crittur. I member once we had a preecher who the fust time he come to see me stood by and seed me unhook his little sheep of a critter while he stood by and looked

like a lord or some kind or a captin' jest like I who was goin' to feed him and bed him fer the night was paid to do the hookin'. I said to Lizy arter we had went to bed that night, "Lizy, that new preecher is simply goin' to pop caps endurin' this yeer. He's not goin' to do any rale shootin'." "Why," says Lizy. "Bekase," I says, "he hasn't got gumpshun enuff to lode his gun." Well, I was right.. That preecher calc'lated afore the eend of the year that he would stop preechin' and go off to some furrin skool.

But I am off the track, as Sim Smith said when he run up one night ferninst a skunk den. Our preecher which now is aint that sort of a man. He aint above waitin' on hisself and he don't low peopple to make compny of him. He jest sails right in and takes charge of the premises. That's why I like him and stand by him, which is to say this is one of the reasons among his many good pints.

I said, Bud, go in. Thar's some lie sope out at the well ef you want to wash yourself, and I speck you do. Then I went to Lizy and tole her to nock up sum grub fer supper, the preecher had come. I told her she needn't fix a weddin' spred. The preecher wasn't used to it at home and I have knowed many a preecher to spile a

sarmont fer the next day by eatin' too many good vittels on Saddy night away from home. I knowed a preecher to brake up a pertracted meetin' to begin on Sunday by eetin' of a whole chickin the night afore. So, I says, Lizy, dont spred yourself. Lizy lowed she knowd what she were doin'. I never have got Lizy so she wont jaw back. He didn't eet so harty, but I seed it was bekase he wasn't so peart as common, tho I'm not sayin' that he was porely. But I didn't much him enny to get him to feed. You see some peopple have got a way of muchin' a preecher at the table to get him to eat jest like you much a dawg. The best plan is to let one have the whole trawf and then eat or not eat without any words of mine. Ole sister Simpson once nigh kilt a preecher by makin' him drink four tumblers of buttermilk, just cherned, when any Christian ort to have knowd that one tumbler was enuff for a man that had dispepsy. Now Tom Buston can chamber a whole quart of sweet or sour milk, for he haint got neither stummick or conshuns. But don't much a man at your own table to git him to eat harty.

I seed arter supper that the preecher had the blews. Now the blews with a preecher is wuss'n the meesuls—that is fer his peopple. How he

kin go from Jineary to Jineary, lookin' and feelin' like he was at a buryin', and keep his flock from goin' to peaces like a gang of bull yearlins whar there is yaller jackits is mor'n I can tell. So I felt a pitty like fer the preecher when I seed he was down in the mouth and I tride to find out whar the mizry were.

One thing I found out, was when he got to tawkin' about the meetin' he had jest helt. He says, "Brother Akers, we tuk in a big class and the peopple seemed so pushed up and zellus. But last preechin' day there wasn't as many as common. I thought shorely thar'd be more. Why, not one-half the convarts was thar." I looked round to see ef Lizy was still a' reddin things up in the kitchin. I never like to crittersize things when she is around, but the time had come fer me to open my mind even ef it wouldn't pull the preecher up frum way down in his mouth. I says, bruther, I think you are a leetle to blame fer all of this. As shore's you're born you preeched endurin' the meetin' jest like peopple should be convartered to have a good time escapin' hell and rejoicin' in havin' their sins fergiven. When you tuk the convarts in you went thru it as fast as Pete Bunn rattles thru the town streets jest to show off them fine newls of his'n. Them

converts went from that meetin' with the idee that they had escaped hell and all they was to do was to wait for the jumpin' off time when they would land rite in Heaven with a crown on 'em. Why didn't you make that takin' into the church sERVICE the longest and best sERVICE of all and explain that sence God had fergiven their sins, and they had jined the church, it was on purpose to make 'em more useful to the church and the world. Them jiners was jest spilin' for the rite kind of preachin' when they was tuk in. Them gineral rules and vows ort to hav tuk an hour or so in explainin', but here you went, as I said, like Pete Bunn and his mewls, and them jiners—some of em—are wonderin' now what they ever jined fer. You preechers have got to preech more than relijun is not so much enjiment and a roarin' big time as it is tryin' to do good and help other peopple. Thar's ole Pink Beasly who is the selfishest old critter in these diggin's, and he never darkens the door of a church. But he's no wuss than a church member whose only idee of relijun is that it is to make him feel good and shout and lay on the bosom of his Saviour. Ole Pink and this kind of a perfesser should be tied together and preeched to a whole week on the sin of selfishness. You preechers tawk a heap

bout stringin' your fish as soon as you ketch em, but what's the good of stringin' 'em unless you kin tote 'em home and use 'em? Yes, Bud, you have got to teech your peeples more what relijun is, and then you won't have so much trubble between your big meetin's. The preecher lowed I was rite and said he thanked me.

But the preecher wasn't out of his blews. I seed he was still bothered. He tole me bout bein' up at Rolly mindin' his own bizness, and then he stopped and said, "Brother Akers, why is it I caint go anywhar without bein' looked at and tawked about as a preecher. They spot me ev'ry time as a preecher, even when I don't say a word, but jest wawk along the street. I am not ashamed at tall of bein' a preecher, but it kinder riles me to have 'em spot me every time. I want 'em to know I'm a preecher by what I do and say, and not by how I look. What is there bout me to tell a man who never seed me or hearn tell of me afore to glue his eyes upon me and say, "Thar goes a blamed preecher?"

Well, I jest laffed and laffed when the preecher out with this, and I called Lizy out to laff with me. I sed, Brother, you are in a bad way when you are so upsot by what strangers say and think. I'm glad you don't mind bein' knowd as

a preecher, and are proud of it. But you struck the nail on the head when you sed you want peopple to know you are a preecher by your life and not by your looks. I'm afeared, Brother, you preechers are too preecherfied. You wawk like it, you look like it, you dress like it. A preecher is only a man, and ef he does much with men, he's got to show em he's of the same breed. Ef they git the idee that he's a cross betwixt a mail and a femail pusson he's gone as fer as his usefulness is consarned. Thar's no sence in a preecher wearin' the graveyard look and that femail meekness. Then why in the name of common sence do you wear that westcut buttoned up to your neck or that preecher coat when you air out amongst men? I like to see a preecher drest a sartain way when he is in the pulpit loft, but out of the pulpit loft he should dress like tother men—scusin' the time when some of 'em wear them things they call full dress. I never seed a man in one of 'em that he didn't look like a rooster jest come in out of the rain. A preecher in a spike-tale! If you have been indulgin' in sich you have cause to feel blew. Be like other men in look and walk and dress. Thar's George Smitt, one of the best preechers in the land. When George is out on the streets

they take him fer ennything from a prise fiter to a Guvnor. He's my idee.

Brother Ivry, I tawked to our preecher tell nigh onto midnight. I haint room to tell you all he said and I said. But ef I didn't git him out of the dumps by what I said, I done the work when I pulled the wad out o' my pocket and tole him his peopple wanted him to go to Jeemstown.

I am ever in truth

In the blume of yooth,

BILDAD AKERS.

You haint had no sirkus up to Rolly yet. I never tend 'em, but I like to be in Rolly on that day to see the perade and heer the steam pianny. I am gittin' ready to go to Confeareance.

BILDAD AKERS AT THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

"That Laymun's meetin' means that the laymun is
edgin' down toards the big eend of the lawg and givin'
the preecher a longer hanspike."—*Bildad Akers.*

CHAPTER XI.

"Is Editor Ivry in here?" were the almost gruff words that came rumbling into the inner office and smote the ears of the editor as he sat at his desk recording sundry changes in the Quarterly Conference dates as ordered by the Presiding Elders.

The reply of the clerk in the outer office was indistinct, but not so the rejoinder of the questioner, who positively avowed that he would "see Editor Ivry, busy or no busy."

Before the editor had time to rise and go out to greet the one whom he knew at once to be his old friend, Bildad Akers, this privileged individual had swept the pile of morning papers from the couch reserved for weary Methodist saints and had sat down, after hanging his hat on the projecting electric light globe. Bildad Akers is one not given much to shaking hands, an art which should be cultivated by every one.

"You're as hot in here as a brick kiln," said Bildad.

The explanation was made that the limited dimensions of the office make it very easy to overheat the atmosphere.

Bildad rushed to the window and raised the

sash, and the arctic air gushed in, to the evident delight of the visitor, who made an inconsequential remark about these "city fellers not knowin' what good healthy arr air."

Of course, the usual preliminary social passes were made, and the editor advanced to the subject which was interesting to him then—Bildad's visit to the Annual Conference. The mention of the subject brought an increment of animation to his face and voice.

"Yes," he said, after emptying his coat pocket of an encumbrance in the shape of a pint of cotton seed which he scattered over the rug, "I promussed to write you a letter, but I lowed sence I had to come up to the Federul cote, I mout as well drap in` and tell you in pusson about my idees of Confeare-ance. But you must ax me bout things. I've talked so much to Lizy and the nabors about my sperunce at New Bern that my idees has got all tangled up like cuckley burs in old Sim Galoosh's cow's tail."

"Well, Brother Akers, did I treat you white down there?"

A kind of apologetic look broke over Bildad's face as he said: "Ivry, Lizy was so scairt that I would go down thar and make a fool of myself and talked so much about wearin' the right

kind of collers, neckerchiefs, and sich duds, and 'bout eatin' and sleepin' and talkin', that I got gumflustered and writ you that little note in the Advocate bout havin' you to tie on to and sich. Bout the fust pusson I seed when I struck New Bern dirt was my ole friend George Smitt, who I lowed had forgot me. He seemed as glad to see me as a hoss is to eat green grass. George was onusally clever all thru. Yes, I'm much obleegeed to you. You give me some good idees and pintered out and interduced me to a likely passel of people. Bob Phillips done himself proud by me and had me set in his offus a cupple o' times. He was in that singin' gang and axed me up thar in that pen ferninst the organ, but I didn't want to make a fool o' myself. That gang sartinly kin sing."

"You axed me how I liked New Bern. Now, I aint a jedge of 'seafarin' towns, but New Bern is a purty town in the day time 'ceptin' thar is too much of a smell of yoisters and sich truck down on the water. I low them people is used to the smell. The people was sartainly kind and hospittable. They make a heap of a feller when he comes and goes, and, twixt the two, I had a site of invites. I et tell I was shamed of myself, and I know Lizy would have said I tawked too

much with my mouth. They axed me a heap about myself. I didn't know so many was intrusted in my letters to the Advocate. One man axed me whar I larned to spell. He peared to be throwin' off on me and I tolle him I was larnin' the dawg latin at the eend of the book afore he had got to Baker, and it 'ud take a hunderd of him to make one Danuel Webster—or Noehy, which is it? I disremember."

"I were glad to meet Brother Beeman. They say he cuts a hefty swoth when he preeches."

"You see I didn't hike down to New Bern jest fer the fun o' the thing. I had larnin' in view. I had been to the quarterlies and deestricts, and you know I went to the gineral, which was a cucky bur affair when it come to gittin' the heads and tails of it. But I wanted to see an Annual agin. I seed it and I aint sorry. I larned sights and the nabors come yit to git me to tell about it."

"I could sence the meanin' o' them preechers as they stood on their feet and tolle what they had did endurin' the yeer. I felt like shoutin' out in meetin' like old sister Bullikins when them preechers spoke about havin' so many good meetin's. I had hearn tell bout Bishups puttin' on the screws and squeezin' out o' the preecher

what he knowed bout liftin' c'lections and sich, but I didn't hear no sich tawk from Bishop Gal-lerway. I was surprised a site in him. He jest seemed like one of the preechers. He didn't tawk or look or act biggoty a bit. I spected him to storm like blue blazes at times, but he was as kind and gentel all the time as ef he wasn't a Bishup. I hearn him preach a Sunday and I jest know ef ole sister Bullikins had been thar she would have histed the ruff. You give me a knock-down to him, and he sed he knowd me allreddy. When I tolle Lizy that, she said it don't take much sense to be knowd by furriners, and that I knowd Jim Branch's hawg that was allers breakin' into other people's patches better than I knowd my own hawgs. What you reckon she were pintin' at?"

At this juncture Bildad remarked that it was "sprizin' how hot these offusses git," and unbuttoned his vest. The raising of a window in the outer office allowed a current of cold air to join the gush which came through the window of the office in which we were sitting, and Bildad was more comfortable.

"Outside of the Conference sessions, what most impressed you?" was the editor's question.

"What most which?" said Bildad. "See here, Ivry, you mus use plain language."

The form of the question was changed, and Bildad proceeded to say that he was very much "intrusted in the Laymun's meetin' and the Jint Board of Finances."

"That Laymun's meetin'," he said, "means that the laymun is edgin' down toards the big eend of the lawg and givin' the preecher a longer hanspike. The preechers has had the big eend all the time and a short hanspike—I mean as fur as ennything scusin' preachin', prayin', visitin', and sich air consarned. I jined the move-ment, and ef I kin I'm agwine to Chattynoogy. I hearn tell of severial preechers who was ferninst the move-ment. Them preechers mind me of a dawg I once seed who had broke its laig. He was in a seller and wouldn't low nobody to come through the door to help him without snarlin' and snappin' at him. You sense the pint?"

"Now as to the Jint Board of Finances; I was jest amazed and thrumscuttled at the idee of them men of bisness leavin' their homes and givin' all that time to figgers and seein' nothin' of Con-fearance—and all fer nothin' at that. It made me feel prouder than ever that I was a Methodist stewart who had plowed his row straight all

these years and had never grumbled when the plow struck roots."

"Now you ax me what I thought bout the new church. It was sartinly a whopper. Did you ever see anything like it? I tol' Lizy and the nabors all about them big jists under the ceilin' and the shinin' winders, and the rooms and the kitchin' whar evry thing was ready for the fire, and them candles that burnt and burnt and wouldn't burn down and drap taller, and how the sextant would take a blazin' fish net and light 'em, and bout the big drap from the front eend of the church to the pulpit, and how they splice the pulpit jest like a table, and so on, and so on. I beleieve in my soul that even Lizy didn't swaller half of what I tol' about that church."

"But, Ivry, I beleieve ef I was a cussin' man, which I'm glad I've got too much sence and grace to be indulgin' in, I would a cussed when my eyes lit on a sight on Monday mornin'. I stood in front of the church and I seed whar that purty rock floor was all gawmed up with terbacc'er juice and I beleieve in my soul I could have counted five hundred seegar eends on the grass. Then the sextant tol' me how some had spit great gobs of terbacc'er—terbacc'er, mind you with the dentical juice—on that purty carpet inside. I

tell you it made my blood bile when I looked at the frunt of the church and hearn the sextant tell what he done about the inside. I jest caint beleeve it was Methodists which was gilty of treatin' them kind New Bern peopple and their church in that way. Ef people is bound to chaw and smoke, in the name of all that is good and clean and holy, let 'em keep away from the meetin' house to do it. I aint nothin' but a plain ole codger, but I know what's due God, and man, and wimmen. But I caint beleeve it was Methodists that done it. It must have been some furrin crowd."

"Yes, I come nigh fergittin to tell you that I had my likeness tuk in that crowd and—"

Then Bildad suddenly asked the editor what time it was. Hearing the reply, "10:30," he jumped up suddenly and rushed out of the office, leaving as an explanation of his unwonted departure only the words, "And cote's in seshun, too."

BILDAD AKERS ATTENDS A PROHIBITION MEETING.

28

"An' I tell you, when you see church members a-tawkin
an' a-votin' agin prohibishun you set it down that in
ninety-nine cases outer a hunderd the whole kit and
bilin of 'em naterally likes the stuff."—*Bildad Akers.*

CHAPTER XII.

The prohibitionists of Wake County met on Thursday to effect an organization of the county. I was not at all surprised to see our old friend Bildad Akers sitting well to the front. He always likes to be found in good company. I was somewhat astonished at his dress. He wore a long black Prince Albert, as full of wrinkles as if it had made a trip across the continent in a tightly packed valise. I was sitting near enough to him to perceive that the coat was fastened with a big brass pin. The button had doubtless perished among the things of the Long Ago. I could almost catch the scent of gasoline coming from that ancient be-wrinkled coat. Then wonder of wonders! Bildad wore a standing collar whose edges nearly touched his ears. I had never seen him before wearing such a large store collar. I found myself losing the thread of a vociferous speech in the mental questioning as to the wherefore of that outre "rig" of Bildad's. He had evidently slipped away from home. "Lizy" would most certainly have made some changes in his toilet.

I had not long to wait, for I had to leave the meeting before adjournment and finish some

work in the office. I was not surprised when, after I had been seated at my desk for perhaps fifteen minutes, I heard the rumbling words in the outer office, "Gals, whar is Ivry?" I rushed to the door and greeted our old friend. I asked him to be seated in the large chair. He said that he would find a seat for himself, and I barely saved him from sitting on the newspaper rack, thus saving the rack from dire calamity.

But that "get up" in the way of dress! Interrogation points must have been in my welcoming glances, for Bildad at once said:

"I tol' Lizy yistiddy that I was agwine to the prohibishun meeting' at Rolly to-day. She said, 'You are not gwine in them duds.' I said, 'Lizy, I haint got no more, and I haint gwine to buy no more.' 'Why, laws sake, she sez, 'whar's them weddin' close? They're as good as new, and you haint worn 'em sence Squire Blake's funeral.' So she went and got em out and cleaned 'em. They was done up in moth balls and sich, and I reckin they do purty well, but I feel purty quare."

Here Bildad elevated his chin, jerked his head to one side, and said: "Brother Ivry, I beleeve I will pull off this here collar. It's cuttin' my

yeers allmost as bad as that barber done when I got a hair cut in Rolly a few years ago."

I told him to adjust his toilet as it seemed best. In a few minutes, coat and collar and brass pin were tumbled in a heap on the newspaper rack.

I, of course, wanted to know what Bildad had been doing since Conferenec. He seemed more than usually talkative. He told me about his farming operations, his combat with a teacher who vowed he would not have the Bible read in the Mill Hill school-house, and other things. But he showed his deepest interest in the "Fust Quarterly." I had heard how he had downed Bill Rollins, the steward, who had made a wonderful speech against raising the preacher's salary; so I asked Bildad to tell me about this.

"Well, it were this way. You know at the fust quarterly, a yeer ergo last month, we histed the salary jest one hunderd dollar. I knowed then it wasn't high enuff, but I thought we would hist it still more this yeer. When I plunked this question right betwixt the eyes of them stewarts, I seed the fire rise in Bill Rollins' eyes. I knowed he were in for a speech. He riz and said that it was gittin' time to stop sendin' peopple to the pore-houses jest to make preechers rich. He was agin any rise. He said the preechers is

extravigint. He said he seed our preecher warin' of store cuffs on a week day, and that, when he et dinner at the preecher's house on that day, they ackshully had a new fangled pie on the table and that he counted two newspapers and magazeens in the house, and that one of the leetle girls had on a brest pin. All this while the pore people was a settin' and bustin' to rake up enough money to pay his salary."

"Edditor Ivry, I was a layin' for Bill. I tolle him he was a reglar church hawg. Here he was, livin' in a good house, on a thousand acre of land, with money in the bank, and eetin' sassage every day in the winter and ham in the summer, and feedin' on the fat of the land, when I knowed that ef the preecher and his family lived half as well we would have to add a thousand dollar to his salary. 'You're a purty thing, Bill,' I sez, 'and you ort to go and crawl under the meetin' house with the balance of the hawgs. Goin' to a man's table and chamberin' his eetin's and smackin' your lips over them pies and then comin' here and faultin' the preecher and his family for feedin' you like they hadn't bin feedin' themselves sence the elder was thar.' Well, I dont know what else I said, but they made a rise to

the tune of another hunderd dollar. An we're gwine to do the same thing next yeer."

In the course of my conversation with Bildad, I remarked that I had heard that he intended going to the Laymen's Conference at Chattanooga.

Here Bildad threw into the waste basket a moth ball which he had discovered in his vest pocket. He expectorated vigorously and rasped out: "Ivry, why dont you let more ar in this here room? How do you live without ar?" Then he told me about his Chattanooga trip.

"You see, Edittor Ivry, I am mightily intrusted in this here Laymun's Moovement. Right down on our sirkit I've seed more downright laziness and general no-countness to the duzzen than you could measure in a yeer. We've got members who could be a bloomin' power ef they would only git to work. The trouble is they dont know how, and a heap of the preechers dont tell 'em how. Why, the preecher adjinin' our work (and it's a countryfied lay out ef ever thar was one), —that preecher is ackshully holdin' mishunary classes at his churches and puttin' all of 'em to work. I dont take much stock in this cry that bekase its in the kentry you caint have all of

them men and hifalutin' things they have in the towns."

"But as I was sayin', I pintedly wanted to go to Chattanoogy, and raly made up a little speech I wanted to spout off, but Lizy made out she was so afeared that Chattanoogy was too furr off fer me. She said I'd git lonesum, and that ef it hadn't been fer you and Bob Fillups at New Bern I would have disgraced the whole kit and bilin' of the family. Not that she's afeared I could do anything scandalous or mean, but that I jest haint got enuff sence to take keer of myself amung furriners and see-farin peopple. So I gess I wont go to Chattanoogy. But it's agwine to be a great meetin' and I jest feel I could tell 'em somethin' that would go to the jints and marrow of the Church."

Of course I wanted to know something about the chances of a prohibition victory down Bildad's way. The old man was on the alert in an instant. He sat more erect in his chair, and it was evident that I had broached a live subject. He said with much feeling:

"I'm a leetle mad yit about us havin' to have that lection. Them legislaturs dried nearly the whole State and then, when we prohibishuners wanted 'em to finish the bizness, they said, 'No

sirs, it will be ruinin' the State not to give the peopple a chance to vote. You mus now take keer of yourselves.' And we are gwine to take keer of our selves."

"We got a whole passel of church members down our way who tawk mighty big bout probishun takin' away their freedom. An this makes me sick. When a church member gits to tawkin' and votin' with the peopple who dont keer a rap for the church and its teechin's, its a bad day that we have lit on."

"I was at Sike's store tother day. Lishy Penn come along with a slick lawyerfied lookin' feller. I says to Sikes, 'Who is that?' Sikes sez, 'He is the feller from Wilminton which have come to work up this section fer licker.' Lishy was a interducin' his slick friend to different ones. I noticed he dodged me, but I overhearn him say to Jim Peeler, 'Let me interduce my frend. He's lectioneerin' agin prohibishun. I don't believe, Jim, in licker, but I do believe in pussonal freedom, and that is what prohibishun will take away from us.' This was too much for Bildad Akers. I steps up and says: 'Lishy, a-beggin' your pardon, it's the pussonal licker you love, and all the pussonal freedum you want is the pussonal freedom to keep on drinkin' that pussonal dram

on the sly.' Then I left Lishy and his frend, as our preecher says, to their roominashuns. An I tell you when you see church members a tawkin' and votin' agin prohibishun you set it down that in ninety-nine cases outer a hunderd, the whole kit and bilin' of em naterally likes the stuff. So I beleeve about the only thing that can bring over sich members to probishun is a good old case of relijun."

"We're gwine to work mighty hard to put up a good vote for prohibishun down our way, but I tell you, you must take your speekers away from the towns and put 'em in these kentry places where they're most needed. They may not be as well fed, but they'll do more good. All us kentry peeple need is to be tole the right way, and we're ginerally ready to take it."

Here Bildad stopped his conversation and asked for coat and collar. Putting on that collar was a mighty labor, but it was at last performed, and, with a promise to write a letter to the Advocate before summer, Bildad departed, leaving a faint odor of gasoline in his wake.

~b

ANOTHER WONDERFUL LETTER.

"Some preechers who set meek and quiet like in the settin room a-waitin' fer 'em to come in, and feelin' that they air a plum needcessity to the fambly ort to git jest one square look at the face of the dear sister or brother and ketch what they say at the back door."—
Bildad Akers.

CHAPTER XIII.

Very often the linotype operator comes into the editorial office to gain information concerning the meaning of certain marks intended to represent words. Sometimes the information is imparted; at other times, the operator is sent back to the machine with instructions to use his best deciphering knowledge and trust to Providence. Many of our correspondents have never been to a writing school.

Occasionally, the linotype man is not after information as to the meaning of marks and scratches. He wishes, simply, in the politest manner possible, to convey the idea that the article in his hand has accidentally slipped through the editorial fingers to the keyboard of the machine instead of into the waste-basket. A mild reproof, of course, is intended by the linotype man—no suggestion that the editor does not know his business.

"You did not intend to have this published, did you?" said the linotype man through his agent, the foreman, the other day as the editor was trying to locate the psychological element in that wonderful victory at Denver in which the delegates actually "hollered" for Bryan longer

than the Chicago delegates for Taft by at least one-half an hour.

The editor turned and saw a half dozen pages of writing paper, sewed end to end with black thread. One end of the long ribbon was in the foreman's hand; the other end trailed on the floor. The chirography of Bildad Akers stood out plain. I knew the article. I knew when I gave it in as "copy." I knew what the trouble was—the strange spelling. I knew that we had been criticised for publishing the articles of Bildad Akers in their original orthography. I knew that to have published them otherwise would not only have offended our old friend, but would have had the same effect on the articles as brushing the dew from the morning glory or rubbing the blush from June peach. So without asking any questions, I simply told the foreman to "let her go" (excuse slang).

"Dear Edditor

I have nothin' speshul to write jest now, but I hav jest read as how edditor Ivry has axed the preechers and laymun to write more for the Ole Rolly. No one kin say that any preecher, elder, stewart, edditor, or any other sarvint of the church has ever appealed to me for help without me bustin' a biler if necessary to despond.

This is what this peace means. I jest want to do Ivry a favur and tone up the litterary apart-
ment of the Ole Rolly agin. I've got sence enuff
to know what an omnybuss bill is. This is the
kind this letter is. I ginerally manages to keep
up with the doins' of our legislatur boddies every
yeer. So evry reader knows why I am writin'
under the head peace of Omnybuss Itims. This
peace is made up of all kinds of fixins' jest the
same as was that stu I et at Confearence which,
as I remember, they called a new brunswick stu.

Well, I do wish the preechers and laymun
would scrach their pens more for the Advocate.
It would do 'em a site of good in trainin' em to
write proper. Ef I had not never writ so much
for the papers I would hav liked a site of havin'
the stile and popylarity I have got as a litterary
scribe. Now you know I'm jest jokin' now.

I wish you could get up a few sanktified fusses
in your paper. I know every edditor likes sich.
Things is too quiet like. It shows that folks is
not thinkin' much, and when folks is not thinkin'
much you may set it down that thar is some
plum lazyness in the ar, and then when things is
so quiet like thar's apt to be some mischiff
agwine on. I remember Jim Moore's wife had
a passel of hefty, vigrus boys, about a dozen of

em it seemed to me. I used to be over thar a sight. As long as them boys was yellin' and goin' on in the backyard, we knowd evrything was jest right, but when things got quiet like, we knowed they was up to some meanness. Now I don't like to have things too quiet in the "Ole Rolly's backyard. It looks like our people is lazy and aint doin' much. The biggest work of the yeer in the ground is goin' on when the Ma-ch wins is blowin'. Write more, preechers and laymun, even ef you stir up hornets. And dont fergit the words of the Bible, 'out of the bundance of the hart the mouth speaketh,' and it must be sed, 'the pen writeth.' When thar's not much speakin' and ritin' thar's not much in the hart, that is, as a rool. I put in these last words for the benyfit of them peopple which the Lord never intended for 'em to say much, and who is purtiest when they says the least.

But afore I drap this subjeck I jest want to say this. Most of the writin' thar is in the Ole Rolly is did by the sirkut riders. Not as I am sayin' that some city preechers aint all right, but it does seem to me that the feel hans, as you call em, is doin' the most work ef you jedge by the reports that comes in.

Craps is mity fine down in these parts. Lizy

was sayin' to me tother day that old Marster is mity good to childern and eejits. I got to thinkin' bout the fine craps this yeer and about the political speekin's and convenshuns and lections and sich like, and I sez to Lizy, Lizy, ole Marster is mity good, to His peepul endurin' lection yeer with so many speekin's and fussin's and votin's and gineral rucuses. We would be in a bad fix ef ole Marster didn't make up fer it all by givin' good craps? The more I watch things the stronger I git in my idees of a Divine Providence.

Tawkin' about politicks, I didnt go to the Sharlit convenshun. They didn't lect me a dellygate, and I am glad I didnt go, fer my man got beat. Yes, as my friend George Smitt says, I am powerful glad I wasn't thar. They had regular shoutin' times. Bill Baggs was thar, and they say he made more fuss than any of 'em. Yet Bill is the feller that says he caint tend the pertracted meetin bekase the fuss makes him nervus. I'm layin' fer Bill the next meetin', which will begin next Sundy comin' too weeks. I'm agwine to take the hide offin him when he tawks about bein' nervus in a pertracted meetin'.

Our preecher is keepin' his jints greased and the church's too, endurin' this sizzlin' hot

weather. He put up with us last Saddy nite. Arter supper we got out in the yard and tawked about things in gineral. He hapened to say why he was late in comin' in. It was nigh candle lite when he lit from his buggy. He said he had jest come from old Sister Buckin's whar he hadn't been in nearly a yeer, and he thawt he ort to stay a rite smart spell. I edged up to the preecher. Lizy had jest went in and I thawt I had a spankin' chance to tawk to the preecher jest as I pleased. So, I says, Bud, I want to ease myself of a few idees which, cordin' to my noshun, would be mity handy to preechers. You all has got several harisies, as George Smitt says, in your mentle make-up.

Furst, harisy 1, when you tawk about takin' a rest now and then and missin' a Sunday and that you have to stand up ole brother So-and-So in your place, you have got the idee that if you miss one Sundy even the barrul will bust all its hoops and the waters of salvashun will go to waist. Now, do you know no peopple aint so tuk up with a preecher but what they raly enjy hearin' some one else once in a while. The church aint so dependent on one sarmont of no preecher. Then arter you come back they will be so much gladder to see you. Bud, dont git the big head about the

needcesity of the meetin' house havin' you all the time, an nobody but you.

Secundly, harisy 2, you have got the idee that you've got to preach a long whet to a country congregashun bekase they dont hear you more'n once a month. Do you sometimes preach an hour'n and a half in sizzlin' wether jest bekase you think you have to tank em full ferninst the next sarmont? You never made a bigger mistake in your life, in spite of what some old galivantin' complainers say. Peeples that has got enny sence looks at the quality of the meat instid of the lenth of the shank. Don't forgit it.

Thurdly, Harisy 2, you was speekin' of bein'afeared old Sister Buckins would not like it if you didn't stay a long time. Now, a great many peeples like fer the preecher to visit like they preech—short and sweet. Some of these peeples who air everlastinglly complainin' about the preecher not comin' to see 'em would be disappinted ef you was to come. Some preechers who set meek and quiet like ln the settin room awaitin' for 'em to come in and feelin' that they air a plum needcessity to the fambly ort to git jest one square look at the face of the dear sister or brother and ketch what they say at the backdoor. It would take a few kinks outer your self con-

sate. Now, ole Sister Buckins, I happen to know, is rarin' rite now bekase you staid so long. She was bilin' soap and wanted to git things done afore Sundy. Visit your peeples, Bud, whether they like it or not, but dont fling away your common-sence, and dont git big-headed about your needcessity to the fambly. Now, Bud, its time to go to roost. Sence we've had pra'r's, you may lite out to bed.

This is what I said to my preecher. Now I mus stop. Next time I may rite you a peace bout as how I cured Molt Henry from dodgin' the stewart jest afore Confeareance. So I will stop without sinin' my name at the tale eend, as this is not a letter, but a peace with my name sined at the dash board.

AN EVENING WITH BILDAD AKERS.

"You may jest say for Bildad Akers that ef he has only a leetle to leave his fambly when he dies, he'll be happy in that last hour ef he kin jest remember that he made things comfortable fer 'em in body and mind and sperrit while he was alive."—*Bildad Akers.*

CHAPTER XIV.

The fire on the hearthstone of the old-fashioned sitting-room drowsed in a bed of gray ashes, and each little sputtering blaze seemed to say: "Leave us alone and go where the warmth of the out-of-doors is covering the earth like a blanket."

So we went out on the ancient porch with its rude railing and sat right under the purple bells of a great wisteria vine. The soft April twilight was steeped in that languorous warmth which rightfully belongs to the month of June. The frogs were croaking in the meadow below, through which only an hour ago the little creek glistened like a skein of silver. Far over the orchard to the right, whose pink and white glories were loading the air with their elusive perfume, the muffled roar of a train was heard, occasionally mingled with the barking of a dog in a distant clump of trees where a neighbor's lamp was glimmering.

It was an evening that seemed carved out of the heart of summer. Such an evening casts a kind of spell upon all who leave open their soul-windows that the sound of the infinite may enter.

Bildad Akers, in spite of his crudeness and ruggedness, belongs to this class of beings. So I wondered not at his silence for the space of five minutes after we had taken our seat on the porch. He was under the spell, and, at the thought, my heart warmed to him as to a kindred spirit. It seemed to me that the strong countenance had relaxed and that certain lines around the mouth had vanished.

He finally broke the silence as he replaced the straggling lock of gray hair which had been lifted from its normal position by a truant breeze which had just stolen in from the orchard.

"Yes, Ivry," he said, "as I was a sayin' jest now at supper, the more I look at my neighbors and the older I git, the harder it gits for me to abuse 'em instid of pityin' em. You town fellers think you see all the sad sights. You are a sight mistaken. A man which keeps his eyes open, and what has a heart, can see a plenty in the kentry, and you caint say that thar aint no poverty here. Well, thar aint no poverty sich as you have in the towns. We've got plenty who are land pore, but that aint the kind of poreness I'm thinkin of."

Here the old man wheeled around in his chair and said: "It makes me sad to think how pore

some of my neighbors is. They're jest as good peopple as walks the face o' the yeth. They've got plenty of land. They drive fine hosses and sich, but they're as pore as Jobe's turkey. Some of 'em don't seem to keer a chickin feather about anything else than to keep on makin' their farms bigger and havin' more money in the bank. They don't figger that all this time they're sufferin' from rale poreness of mind and heart."

"Why, there's John Winkler down at the cross-roads. He owns more lan than anybody else in the township, and drives the fastest hosses. He has a passel of childern, some of em growd up, and not a single one of 'em has any eddication. Now, I hain't got none, but its bekase I never had the chance. I know what it means tho. Ole John says all the eddication his childern need is to read and write, and that ef they can only git along well in the world, they'll be allright. His idee of gittin' on right is to have plenty of lan and have money in the bank. To see old John losin' sight of mind riches and never stoppin' to think how pore even a rich man is when he is mind-pore it jest makes me sick. I will leave my childern a leetle when they lay me over yander on that hill among them graves; but this is not what makes me feel good. It's the fact that I

give em all a good eddication. I don't want my childern mind-pore."

"What you reckon," continued Bildad, "Bill Summers said when the preecher tried to git him to send that purty bright gal of his to college? She's an ambitious gal and wants to make somethin' of herself. Bill said that he reckoned as fer as dollars and sents was consarned he could make the raise, but that ef he sent Sally off he would have to hire an extry hand, and that his polisy was never to add a expense to a expense. It takes that kind of man to do what he done. Sally was the gal that wanted to raise a leetle flower gyarden right ferninst the cotton-patch. She had already sot out some plants when one day her daddy come in and begun to make a fuss about it, and then went out and tore the whole thing up. He said that groun was too good for cotton to be wasted that away. Do you know that we have got too many out in the kentry that looks at it that away. They seem to think that life is not worth nothin' 'cept you kin turn it into money and hawgs and hosses and land. They don't seem to ketch the idee that the porest critter in the world is the money-rich man who is mind-pore and heart-pore."

"Some of my neighbors, and well-to-do at that,

eats the porest grub and wears the porest close, and never buys any furnitoor for the house, and never fixes up the house none, and never gives the boys and gals any schoolin', jest bekase they want to leave somethin', they say, to their fambly when they die. Why caint they larn that makin' their fambly happy and well-to-do in mind and sperrit while they live is wuth more'n the biggest fortune ever left? You may jest say for Bildad Akers that ef he has only a leetle to leave his fambly when he dies he'll be happy in that last hour ef he kin jest remember that he made things comfortable for 'em in body and mind and sperrit while he was alive. That's the most of my relijun, Ivry, and I beleev that was the relijun Ole Marster teached when He was upon yeth."

I here stopped my friend, Bildad, to say that he might be painting too dark a picture for his country neighbors, and that, as bad as it is in the country sections, it is worse in the towns.

Bildad simply replied: "That doesn't make it no better in these kentry diggin's, do it?"

Of course, there was no reply to this kind of argument.

"Now you see," he continued, "I'm nothin' but a plain ole codger, but I keep my head wheels a-turnin', and I think a sight of things you don't

have any idee I'm thinkin' of. I'm shore that the kentry preecher dont lay out a wide enough land in their gospel plowin'. There's a plum heap more for 'em to do than to preach a sarmont once a week in the meetin'-house, stay all night with one of his members, take up a c'lection the fust good Sundy, and hold a meetin' in the summer or fall. Our peopple need workin' up jest as they do in towns, and need it a sight wuss. The gospil must git into the homes and the soshul life of our peopple. It must clean up the frunt yards and put paint on the house. It's got to make things comfortable and put books and papers into the hans of the boys and gerls and send them off to our colliges and sich. Don't you think so?"

I assented most heartily to all of this.

"Then you see," continued Bildad, "our young peopple's life needs a turnin' over. They need more than to go to preachin' and Sundy scool. The pint is, they must have more to do, and this will give 'em what you call soshul life and mind and heart trainin' at the same time. I git mad every time a kentry preacher talks about not bein' able to run a Sundy-scool endurin' the winter or havin' a Epwurth Lege. This air a reflection on our people. We've got to have the same kind of life and church work in the kentry that

them town peopple have. We air made out o' the same dirt. The preechers must git to givin' the gospil a wider range in the kentry than they are now givin'. They have jest naterally got to git to studyin' kentry condishuns. I've been tryin' to git my preecher to have a Epwurth Lege at our meetin'-house, but he sez that it caint be did. I jest know it kin."

At this juncture, the sound of a squeaking wagon was wafted to our ears on the night breeze. Bildad suddenly paused in his conversation. Mrs. Akers, who had just joined us said, "Who's that, Bildad?" Bildad said nothing, but looked out into the darkness of the road, where the wagon, making a hideous noise with its wheels, was passing. When it finally turned the corner of the road, Bildad leaned back and gave the first big laugh I had heard from him in some time.

Mrs. Akers said querulously: "Well I wonder what ails that man. Bildad, what on the face of the yeth is ailin' of you?"

I, too, was wondering what change had come over the spirit of Bildad's dream.

He finally said: "Do you know who that was a-passin'? It was ole Jimmy Flack, who is the second biggest land-owner in this township. I jest

had it to come to my mind the last preachin' day when the preecher lifted his Confearence c'lections. Ole Jimmy has got the idee that the only riches is in land and hosses and sich. He lives like a hawg, and makes his peopple live like him. He's got his ole oman to think jest like him, only wuss. They are members and are on my stewart's list. I know all about 'em. The best knower of human natur, Ivry, is a Methodist stewart. He has a fine chance for findin' out what kind of a critter a pusson air."

"Old Jimmy come in late that Sundy, and he 'peared to be mightyly flustrated bout somethin'. I knowed he had got to the meetin'-house afore I did, and I didn't know until arterards why he come in late. He had put in his buggy four years of corn for his hoss. When he got to the meetin'-house, he found he had drapped two years. His ole oman had made him go back a mile to find them two years the buggy had drapped."

"When the preecher got through his sarmont and lighted on the c'lectin' bisness, I jest couldn't keep from laffin' when I seed he had sot his hart on gittin' five dollar from ole Jimmy. He had staid all night a week or two afore with the ole man and he know'd ole Jimmy was able to pay a hunderd dollar. He never counted, tho,

on gittin' more than five dollar, bein' as how he had staid all night with him but oncet. Well, it was a sight to see ole Jimmy and ole Mrs. Jimmy endurin' that c'lection. She looked mad all the time, and oncet when he made a moshun like he was goin' to speak, she grabbed his arm and pulled him back. The sweat was pourin' from his face all the time. He felt that all his money give to the c'lections was jest money plum wasted, but he knowd he must give sumthin' for an excuse. Well, the preacher tawked and tawked and looked at Jimmy. I santered over, and, fool-like, put in a word. Jimmy jest looked stubborn and straight ahead. His ole oman looked mad. Finally he axed Tom Fallows for a pensul and he writ somethin' down. We know'd then he had prescribed somethin' and we felt sartin the work was done. What you reckun he promussed to pay? Only a measley quarter of a dollar. This was not the wust. I happened to drive behind him and his wife arter the meetin' broke up, and what she said to ole Jimmy for wastin' that quarter was a sight, and she never let up with her tongue tell they druv into their yard whar I counted forty bale of cotton. Now, it is sich truck we have got to deal with here in the kentry. It makes me mad to think of it. Yit, when I re-

member how big the preecher's eyes got when he looked on ole Jimmy's prescription and saw it was only a quarter, I caint help from laffin'. And that was what I was laffin' about as that waggin passed."

I here had to tell Bildad we had plenty of ole Jimmy Flacks in town, and that many of them do not give even a quarter. He did not answer this statement, but yawned and said:

"But I guess it is bout time to turn in. Come in and have pra'rs, and you can go to roost."

As I lay in the best bed of Bildad's hospitable old-fashioned home that night, I thought much of the country problem which Bildad Akers had long pondered, and, after I fell asleep, I dreamed that a wonderful change had come across old Jimmy and his wife, and that they had actually subscribed to the "Old Raleigh."

BASEBALL AND THE CHURCH PAPER.

"Now, I've thought a heap 'bout what you said, and
I've jest lit on this, which I believe is a fack, that one
of the pint blank things that is ailin' our church is that
our peopple don't know nothin' about their church."—
Bildad Akers.

CHAPTER XV.

It was only an ordinary knot of men and boys that almost blocked the doorway of the waiting-room. It was not difficult for the detached lounger to discover that base-ball was the subject of discussion. I was about to pass on to the ticket window when my ears caught a familiar note in one voice which seemed unusually obtrusive and masterful. It dealt out with enthusiasm and authority such words as "pitcher" and "run," and averred that "that pitcher jest naturally had ought to be tuk frum the game in the fust eenin."

Of course, I did not pass on at once to the ticket window. I looked over the fringe of the crowd at a hale animated old man who was the centre of interest. I did not mean to catch his eye, but he caught mine, and, stopping in the midst a sentence descriptive of the "pitchin" power of a "feller down my way," he advanced toward me and gave me what is called a handshake, while he roared his salutation through the waiting-room.

I knew him to be Bildad Akers before I saw him in the centre of the crowd. If there had been any doubt, it would have been dispelled after that hand-shake. There is no other like it.

"Bless my soul, Ivry, who'd a suspishuned a-seein' you down here jest as I was a-hopin' you'd never ketch on as I had been to Rolly. Fer jest as sartain as I see you you've got to plunk somethin' down in the Advocate about me. I don't keer, but Lizy says people 'll think I go to Rolly jest to see and be seed, and then to git my name in the Advocate. So I sorter thawt I'd git out of these diggin's without havin' sot eyes on you. But shore as guns iurn you have cotch me this time. Well, well—Ivry how air you anyway?"

I answered Bildad as courtesy and brotherly feeling demanded, and informed him that I was going down his way and anticipated with great pleasure the privilege of talking to him on the train. The old man drew his fingers through his hair, and his face took on an expression which suggested to me a painful query on his part as to what "Lizy" would say now. But the dominant feeling in a moment conquered, and his pleasure expressed itself in the words: "I'd jest as soon talk to you as any of them other fellers." This from Bildad meant much.

In a few minutes we were on the train. The car was crowded. Not a vacant seat could be found. There was one defiant looking little man

with a stubby mustache and bull-dog jaw, who was occupying two double seats. Bildad eyed him for a moment, and then approached him and said: "You feller, thar, hike them hoofs offen that seat and dont make me think so much of a hawg tryin' to eat two years of corn at the same time." The little man at first hesitated, but looking up at the owner of that voice, he immediately "hiked." I turned the seat and settled down for our chat.

The conductor came around. There was a look of trouble on Bildad's face. I found that he had not become accustomed to the little slip that had been placed in his hat. "Ivry," he said, "it's a piccayunish thing to mind, but do you know it riles me every time that captin puts one of them things in my hat. It's too much like brandin' steers or ticketin' punkins and roosters out at the State Fair." I tried to explain the utility and necessity of the slip, but even then he was not satisfied.

After criticising some hill-side plowing that was being done in a field to the right, my companion looked at me a moment and said:

"Ivry, you think I'm 'shamed of myself, aint you? about that baseball bisness? Well, I haint one bit. I haint only been tawkin' about it, but I

went to the game this very evenin'. I mout as well tell you that ever sence I was a boy at the old Pond scool-house and played "cat and town ball," I've jest naterally hankered arter evry good game of baseball what was in walkin' or ridin' distunce. Why, it's like hearin' preechin' when I see a good game. I larn so much bout myself and others. To see a feller hold a bat jest like he was a-goin' to miss the ball minds me of these fellers who never spect to make anything in life, and never does. They dont spect to hit the ball. Then to see a man what has got on a base and dont wait fer a ball to put him on another base jest teaches me that it wont always do fer a feller to wait for somethin' to turn up, as old Big Sellers has been a-doin'. It takes the best quality of brains to play a good game, and it jest pintedly stirs all the bile in me to see two good teams a-playin agin one another. It'd help you, Ivry, ef you would take more intrust in sich. No, I aint got a thing to be 'shamed of; even ef I am a stewart in the church."

I assured Bildad that if he did not have laid up against him any sin more grievous than that of liking baseball, his account with the Recording Angel was all right.

In spite of the fact that Bildad's conscience

had seeemd so clear, my assurance that I attached no blame to him seemed to please him. But he put his mouth close to my ear and said in a subdued tone. "You needn't tell Lizy 'bout my goin' to the game this evenin'. I tell her 'bout everything, but wimmin is so quare, what's the use of botherin' them with things they caint understand and may make a fuss about?"

The train roared on. The conversation lagged and finally stopped. Bildad was nodding. I allowed him to sleep. This, however, was only for a few minutes. The voice of the porter calling a station waked him. He rubbed his eyes and yawned. Then he said: "Ivry, how is the Advocate?"

I told him that the Advocate would be getting along finely if we could only keep any money in the treasury; that unpaid subscriptions were bothering us, especially in the summer season; that we had a good many friends among the subscribers, but that a large number would take the paper as long as we would not say anything about pay, but, that the moment we would ask them for their subscription, they would get mad and stop the paper. I dwelt for a while on the fact that the "Old Raleigh" is, with one exception, the only first class religious paper in South-

ern Methodism which is supporting itself from only one-half of a State. I closed by saying, "If we had more friends like you, Brother Akers, we would sweep everything."

The old man slowly shook his head, and said: "We have got some quare fellers among us Methdists. I met up with one of 'em last week. I was a hitchin' my hoss at the post-office when Jeems Sedly come out with a letter in his han. He was mad as fire. I said, Jeems, what's the matter? Jeems said, 'Jest look thar,' and he handed me the letter. I tuk it and read it and seed where you was a-axin' him to send you some money, sence he was three year behind. I said, 'Jeems that's all right. Why dont you anty up?' He said: 'That's a dun, and I hate duns like snakes.' I said: 'That's quare. Ef I owe a man anythin' and haint antied up, I caint blame the man for wantin' his money and tellin' me so.' 'Well,' said Jeems, 'I prescribed for only a year.' I axed Jeems if he had paid for a year. He scratched his head and said he hadn't, but lowed to do it. But they want me to pay for the time ever sence then. This is eight times they have wrote me, and I am gittin' tired of it.' 'Well, have you wrote for 'em to stop the paper?' says I. 'No,' he says, 'they knowd I prescribed

for only a year. They ought to have stopped the paper.' 'Why didn't you stop it by not takin' it out of the office?' says I. 'You knowd ef them Advocate fellers stopped the paper thout your orderin' it stopped, you would have got your dander up, and would cuse em of not wantin' to credick you and prehaps cuss 'em. Ef you was too no-count to write 'em, why in the name of common-sence did you keep on takin' the paper out of the office? You wouldnt write to 'em, and you kept on takin' the paper and readin' it, and how in the name of common-sence and relijun can you be agin payin' 'em?' Jeems only said he wasn't agwine to pay even ef he had been readin' the paper all this time. Well, I seed it was no use to talk to him any more. I left him, and as I left, I says to myself: 'I trust to the good Lord the "Old Rolly" haint got many like Jeems to fool with. He needs both sense and relijun.'"

I assured Bildad, that we had so many good, true men and women among our readers, that, if he didn't mind, we would not talk on the subject any more. It was a sore subject with me, and had given us more trouble than anything else connected with the paper.

But Bildad was not willing to leave the sub-

ject altogether. He said: "I have got an idee in my head which has been buzzin' thar ever sence I hearn you at the Deestrict. You said down thar in your speech that Methdism wont never d'liver the goods (you didn't say it adzactly in them words) ontell our peeples git to knowin' more about the church—not one siety, but the whole church. You said peeples had to know what their church was doin' afore they could feel a rale intrust in it, and that they would never do anythin' ontell they felt this intrust."

"Now, I've thought a heap bout what you said, and I have just lit on this, which I believe is a fack, that one of the pint blank things that is ailin' our church is that our peeples dont know nothin' about their church."

"Do you know our preacher said he was a-ridin' on the train once talkin' to a Piscopal Bishup, and up comes one of his town stewarts, worth sites of money and playin Big Ike in the church. He was interduced to the Piscopal Bishup, and he axed him to come to his town and preach in his church. He didn't know the names of our own Bishups. He didn't take his church paper, and didn't know a Bishup from a side of sole leather, and he thought the Piscopal

Bishup was a big Methodist. How does that strike you—and him a stewart?"

"You know I went to that Deestrict two years ago whar our Bishup preached. I et dinner whar he et one day. Bob Toole was thar. You know Bob. He's a big Methodist on big occashuns, and when thar's payin' to be did. Well, Bob Toole tried to play big when he was a-talkin' to the Bishup. He told the Bishup all about his fine house, and big bizness, and how they was goin' to put a big winder in the new church when they buried him. But he busted every thing to pieces when he axed the Bishup what stashun he sarved when he was at home. An old codger like me had more sence than that. Bob didnt know any thing about his church. How could he, when he never seed his church paper in his life?

"Now, what are we goin' to do with Methodists like that, and how are we goin' to make any other kind ceptin' we git them to read the church paper?"

"My idee is this," continued Bildad, after he had expectorated out of the window. "We've got to sess the Church members for puttin' the church paper into the hands of all the people jest like we sess em for mishuns and eddication and sich, and then let the whole church or the Confearence

run the paper and charge no prescription price. We've got to larn the people bout their church doin's jest as we larn them about these other things that we're sessed fer. I don't believe we are gwine to work out our sums which so many are scratchin' their heads over ontell we do this. What do you think of that idee, Ivry?"

I had to say that it looked plausible, and that a plan of this kind would make a new Methodism.

By this time our train had run up to a small station and was just pulling out when Bildad rose from his seat and, saying only "Bless my soul!" rushed out of the car. It was his station, and the last view of him showed him diving into the crowd that stood in front of the depot.

ADVICE TO FARMERS.*

* This letter was originally published in THE PROGRESSIVE FARMER.

"How in the world a man which grubs, and plows, and feeds hogs and cattle and sich can expect to make a good livin' without his farm paper is more'n I kin sense."

Bildad Akers.

CHAPTER XVI.

FEBUARY 8,

IN THE YEER OF THE LORD, 1906.

DEER PERGRESSIVE FARMER:—We was settin' by the fire last night and I says to Lizy, "I've got an idee of writin' to the Pergressive Farmer." Lizy giv me one of them looks which any man who has a woman who speaks her mind right out in meetin' knows, and she looks over me kinder pitiful like and says, "Bildad, it pears to me you have enough to do writin' to your church paper. I'm not so certen but you've writ too much allreddy." And then she went back to her nittin'.

I said, "Lizy, I've got idees. They may be homemade and not slicked up like some, but I've larned that a pair of nit galluses does jest as good wurk as them you buy in stores. I've got the idees, and it pears to me I want to spout em out on paper jest as bad as wimmen like to talk afore and arter the sarmont in a meetin' house. I axed our preecher last meetin' Sundy why he hadn't writ up his sirkut and he said he was modest and was afeared some'un would say he was tryin' to be heady and forrerd. I tolle him and I tell you that our Preecher's stripe of mod-

esty is like smut on wheat—good for nothin' and bad for everything. No, I'm goin' to write to the Pergressive Farmer. Its my duty. I've bin takin' that paper a long time."

Yes, Mr. Po, I've bin takin' the Farmer for nigh onto twenty yeer onless I disremember. I sometimes git arter my church peopple for not takin' their paper printed in Rolly. It prints a tipe mighty like yours, it pears to me. Now, my pint is: A man what's a farmer needs your paper jest as bad as a man what's a Methodist needs Bro. Ivry's paper, or a man what's a Baptis needs Mr. Baley's paper. How in the world a man that grubs and plows and feeds hogs and cattle and sich can expect to make a good livin' without having' his farm paper is more'n I kin sense. The trubble with our farmers is that they don't keep up with the times. They don't see that the world is lopin' on, and that the man that wants to keep up must jump into the waggin. They say they air goin' to rejuce the number of rewral delivries in North Calliny. I was talkin' to Bose King tother day bout it, and I says, Bose, it'll be a rank tearin' disgrace to our State ef they take down them boxes. It'll mean that our kentry peopple is not readin' enough, which means that they are not keepin' up with the times.

I allers speaks up Mr. Po, for the Pergressive Farmer. Ole John Bony borrhored my paper tell I sed to him that the thing had to stop and that he must take it himself. When you greed to let him have it for a leetle while for ten cents you got him. Ef it had bin eleven cents you'd a missed fire, like an ole army musket with a wet cap. But John got started and I seed him with your paper tother day, and I do believe that he's subscribin' regular, aint he?

But I'm off the track a leetle grain. I was lowin' to tell you that I've got sense enough to know a few things, and I know that thar's many new things goin' on in the farmin' world and that the farmer must take his farm paper to find out and keep up with em. The Pergressive farmer is allus givin' us something new. Thar is plenty of picturs. I looked at one of your animil picturs not long ago and handed it over to Lizy, and said, That thar animal is feerfully maid. Then you tell us all about vaxinatin' the sile. I didn't ketch on to this at fust. I thought vaxinatin' a man's arm was a plum failure and I believe so now. What good is there in vaxinatin' the sile? I sed to myself. But I'm a convert to the scheme.

Now, Mr. Po, I dont want to befuddle any of

your readers tryin' to make em believe I'm one of your big farmers. I have a few hunderd akers and I work evry aker to its very levelest. I thank God I hav'nt the land eetch. Work well what you've got is my mottoe. I beleeve in ditches and clean creek banks and teracin' and all that. You caint find a brier patch on my farm, and a red hillside runs from me like a skeeter from pennyrile. I dont plant a site of cotton like some of my nabors, but I plant enuf, I think. I believe in divarsity of crops. I havent bought a bushel of corn or wheat or a bale of hay sence Lizy and me moved from Pisga township, whar we was married. I haint bought any hog meat but once and that was the yeer when kolery broke out in our seckshun.

But, Mr. Po, what hurts me most is so many of our farmer peopple dont know a good thing when they see it. They are eternally wantin' to move to town. Lige White had money in his pocket tell he sold his farm and moved to Rolly whar he went into keepin' a little grosery store. I met him one mornin' front of his store. He had a yaller weskit that no decent man ought to wear 'ceptin' on Sundy. He spoke to me, axed about things in the ole naborhood, and then hitched me to one side and sed he had jest been to the

bank to get a note renued and that he was jest thinkin' afore he seed me of what a blab-mouthed mistake he made when he giv up farmin'. He says, Bildad, ef I could jest go back to turnin' up the sile and burnin' bresh and walkin' over my farm Sundy evenin' to see how things have growed, and smell a wheat field in May, and wash my face at the well, and hear the crows, and go to town with cotton and sell truck and go back and go to sleep at a goodly hour and wake up like a new man at daylight, I would be happy agin."

Mr. Po, write all you can about our farmer peopple leavin' of the kentry and warn 'em agin it.

But I've writ enough fer this time. Be shore to read the proof well. I noticed that there was some mistakes in spellin' in my last letter to my church paper.

Yours til deth,

With all my breth,

BILDAD AKERS.

HOW BILDAD AKERS COLLECTED
MOLT HENRY'S QUARTERAGE.

"The Bible says, 'God loves a cheerful giver,' dont it?
Then don't tell me He loves the feller when gittin anything from him for the preecher or mishuns is like fishin' fer a well bucket with a pair o' grabs with one prong."—
Bildad Akers.

CHAPTER XVII.

Hearing that my old friend, Bildad Akers, was in town, a visitor at his daughter's home, I called on him after tea. I felt that this would be my only chance of seeing him, as I surmised that the recent lectures of his wife, "Lizy," on the evils of publicity had fortified him with the determination to keep away from the Advocate office—at least for a season.

I found that I had called rather too early. Bildad and the family were at dinner. While I was wondering, as I sat alone in the sitting room, what was being said by Bildad during the meal which he always called "supper," he made his appearance in the doorway. He was brushing some crumbs from his mouth, as I rose to shake his hand.

To the stereotyped question, "How are you feeling, brother Akers?" the answer came in the words: "Middlin' jest and kinder holler."

He must have seen a perplexed look on my face, for, coming nearer and lowering his voice, he said: "I don't want to hurt Sally's feelins', and I don't want to talk about what a visiter shouldn't never talk about, but the rale bald-headed fact is, I do feel kinder holler in my inner works. These

town eatin's dont suit me. I'm used to havin' a plain old-fashioned supper eended off with a bait of some kind of guarden sass like cold cabbige or beans this time o' year. Now Sally, she got in yander a fine table, I reckin,—plenty of silver and plates in the shape of gourds and sich, but the bread was cut up in leetle squares, and what do you reckin were betwixt em? Nothin' but a slice of tomater. Sallie tolle me she sometime fries 'em. Now, what do you think of that? I shorely didn't raise her that away. Its some collige doin's she larned when I eddicated her. Them green plum-like things that is all seed she had too. I come nigh forgittin' and tryin' to slice em with my knife like I did at the Deestrikt a cupple or so of years ago. The whole layout didn't fill me up like I'm used to. So I feel kinder holler, you know."

This was plain, characteristic talk on the part of the old man, and while I could hardly repress a smile while he was talking, I felt moved by a warm sympathy for him; for, doubtless, he had eaten an early dinner, and his vitals demanded the purely substantial.

After delivering himself of his views, Bildad sat down on a couch. He, rough, untutored, and big, and the couch, richly upholstered and fragile

looking, made a picture which represented incongruity, if nothing else.

A few words concerning the little commonalities was passed. Then, Bildad, rising from his seemingly uncomfortable position, yawned, and, raising both arms, gave himself a mighty stretch. "Let's git out of here, Ivry," he said. "Its mighty comfortin' in here, and my peopple will be in terrectly, but ef I stay I will be shore to go to sleep. Lets get out in the ar."

This suggestion suited me, and I proposed taking a walk, after having spoken to the rest of the family. The evening was fine. A silver moon rode in a sky as free from cloud as on a frosty December morning. There was not a ripple in the dense foliage of the maples as yet untouched by the brush of autumn. The full blue of the sky shaded off to the west into that pearly glow which is characteristic of September skies. There was inspiration in all that the eye could see. It was a refreshing newly-brewed cup which nature held to the lips of the aesthetic soul. I do not know that my companion took as full a draught as I did. He was in a mood for opening his heart and using his tongue, and, as we walked along, he gave me fresh glimpses of his vigorous unique nature.

I asked him how the circuit was going to come out on the wind-up before Conference. I knew that I had asked him a question which he would be glad to answer. Because Bildad Akers made God first in his heart and life, he had made his church the principal institution in all the domain of his citizenship.

"Well, Ivry," he said, "I'm a hopin' we'll come out at the big eend of the horn. Bildad Akers has never yit saw his church come out at tother eend—and he wont as long as he is above ground and can tawk, and ride, and get money in hand, house, horses, hawgs, and sich. That's me."

"But I've had a hard time as stewart for many a yeer, and the longer I'm a stewart, the more I see into the cussedness of some of the human natur that some Methodists has. How the good Lord stands em I caint see. Sich dodgin' and complainin', and cussin' and lyin', a rale Methodist stewart does run up ferninst. Its got so most men are scared to take hold of the bisness, and when a man hangs on to the office, he's got to do nothin', or else take the bit in his teath and go ahead as a sufferer for Christ's sake."

"How did we ever begin gittin' into the church them people who would ruther have a tooth pulled than to give anythin' to the Lord? To

hear em shout and sing and "brother" and "sister" at the meetin's, you'd think they was sproutin' wings for Heaven. But to see 'em makin' faces and groanin' and complainin', as they hand out their little twenty-five cent pieecs to the stewart jest afore Confearence, you'd think they was jest from the pore-house, and that it was big me and little God with them. And it is, Ivry. Don't you tell me that God raly loves sich people. The Bible says 'God loves a cheerful giver,' dont it? Then dont tell me He loves the feller when gittin' anything from him fer the preecher or mishuns is like fishin' fer a well bucket with a one prong pair of grabs. I have got some idees on this subject what I want to see in the Advocate. Lizy says I mosey about too much in the colyums of your paper allready but I must drap you a few lines on these idees afore long."

The conversation brought up in my mind a question on which I had several times intended to draw Bildad Akers out. It was as to how he had ever succeeded in getting twenty-five dollars for the Church from Molt Henry. So I asked Bildad to tell me all about it. By this time we were passing a drug store, and I suggested to him that we might go in and take some refresh-

ing light drink. I had forgotten the other time when I had made the same proposition.

"None fer me," he said. "I was raised on spring water and butter-milk, and when you see Bildad Akers suckin' furrin' truck through a yaller quill, you know he has back-slided."

"Now about Molt Henry. I dont hope the feller no harm. He's my neighbor, and he calls himself a Methodist. Talk about angels a-laffin' fer joy over the convarsion of sinners, but I think there must have been some laffin' among a whole passel of em, when I got that hunk of money from Molt Henry."

"You see, Molt has been a Methodist fer a long time. He's knowd down in my settlemint as the only Methodist who had been able to keep his church standin' fer twenty-five yeer without payin' a red copper to the church. You know he's as smart as blazes to be able to do that. Yit he has did that very thing. The stewart has got arter him. He'd put em off fer one reason or tother till jest afore Confeareance. Then he'd give em a wuthless order or jew bill or sich, and that was the eend of it for that yeer. The next yeer the stewart would be afeard to mention the back pay to him. They thought by not mentionin' it they mout git somethin' at the eend of the yeer.

But it was no go. It went that way yeer arter yeer.

"Up to that time he had kept his money in his pocket (he's got money, the ole rascal) and his standin' in the church too. Why, he's the biggest man at our meetin's. One time the preecher preeched a sarmont on robbin' God by not bringin' tithes into the store-house, and said every member who hadn't paid nothin' to God oughter to be ashamed of themselves. He said it was a blasted shame fer a church siety with thousands of dollars to have God go round beggin' fer a leetle fifty dollar from em. Molt fust turned and then sot with his back to the preecher, and then got up and walked out of the meetin'. He told Bill Bent who was settin' outside with a gigglin' gal in a buggy that the preecher had singed his feelins' all over. He lowed that a member who had sung and shouted as much as he had fer that church ought to be crederted with somethin', and oughtn't to be insulted like a mangy dog."

"But Molt got over that. He had a heap of gall, but not enough to play that racket long. So he got to goin' back, and once when the preecher in his sarmont hollered out in a drermatic way, 'It's more blessed to give than to receive,' Molt hollered out Amen loud enough to be hearn down

to the forks of the road. Arter that he seemed to consider his standin' sot up agin."

"Well, it was not long arter that when Molt bought that track down on the river and moved nigh me. We was neighbors. He built him a right nice house. He was allers good at makin' money, ef he is no count. So the stewarts that yeer give me Molt's name. The stewart who had him was mighty glad. He said I was welcome to him. I didn't say nothin'. But, Ivry, you've never lived in the kentry, and you dont know nothin' about weasuls and sich. I had a hunderd chickens kilt one yeer by a measley weasul. I watched fer that weasul fer nearly a yeer. But I didnt watch fer him as much by a sight as I watched fer Molt Henry to get some money from him. He was as cunnin' as that weasul and as slick as a otter. On every 'casion he escaped from my hands. Confeareance was a comin' on, and I was raly afeared that I was a-goin' to make a plum failure of Molt Henry."

"But Proverdence hoped me, Ivry. It wasnt no luck. It was pure blank Proverdence.

"This is the way it was. Jest afore confeareance I was over to Hinton one day. That's our regular tradin' place, you know. I was talkin' to Hines in his offus, when Sim Blalock cum in. Hines

and Blalock are both great Methodists. They was a axin' me about matters on the sirkut, the preecher, the Confeareance, etc. I told 'em all about my troubles as stewart, specially bout the time I was havin' with Molt Henry. When I mentioned Molt's name I saw a quare-like look come into Sim's face. He said: "Come out to the lot, Bildad. I want to show you the likeliest hoss you ever sot your eyes on." I went with him. He did show me his hoss, which was no shakes, but he took me to one side and told me how I could manage Molt. When he told me, I felt almost as proud somehow as when I got jined in marriage to Lizy, and I give Sim an extra squeeze of the hand when I left him."

"I went by Molt's house that evenin'. As I rid up I seed him at the barn, and he was saddlin' a hoss as fast as he could. I knowd he was goin' to take the road to the crick. So I takes a lane leadin' to the barn and cuts him off afore he thought I had retched the house. He was mighty glad to see me, he said. He said he was so glad I had come as soon as I had, 'fer' says he, 'I was about to ride over to the mill place and I would have missed you.' "

"Without any p's and q's, I told him my bissness. He knocked a fly offen his hoss, studied a

while and said: "I reckin, Brother Akers, you stewart has a hard time. People ought to be so willin' to give that it would be a pleasure fer you to do your work." 'Eggsactly,' says I. Then he went and looked up into the winder of the barn loft, the Lord knows why, and then come back, and cleareu ...s throat and said: 'Brother Akers, I am sorry to put you off, sence Confearence is so nigh, but I guess I'll have to do it unless you kin wait ontell next Monday.' I knowd he was usin' the same old tricks on me, and I knowd what I wanted. So I says: 'I am powerful anxious to fix up my list by to-morrow,' which was Sunday. 'Well,' says Molt, 'I guess I'll have to give you a jew bill.' His ole jew bill had been worn to a frazzle in the pockets of other stewart. 'Eggsactly, Molt,' says I. 'Here's a pensul and a piece of paper. Write off your jew bill.' He looked pleased a sight. He said, 'Brother Akers, the church needs all the money it can git, and as I had to fall a leetle short last year, I'll stretch myself this year.' I knowd the least he intended to give anything, the bigger he had always made his jew bill. So he laid the paper on the saddle and writ somethin'. It was a jew bill fer twenty-five dollar to be paid outen the fust money he should git. He had wrote sich jew bills for stew-

arts afore, but it shorely meant somethin' this time, though he didn't sense it a bit."

"He said: 'Go in the house and eat a bite. I'll have to leave you a spell.' I said, 'Hold on, Molt, I've got somethin' fer you. I seed Sim Blalock over to Hinton today and he axed me to fetch you fifty dollar which he said he owed you on that piece of land you sold him,' and I handed him twenty-five dollar. He knowed what that meant. Ef you ever saw a face turn green and yaller at the same time, it was Molt's face. He started to say somethin', but he changed his mind and writ out a receet fer fifty dollar. I said goodbye and left."

"They said it made Molt sick and that he laid abed about all day Saddy. But he was out to meetin' on Sunday and sot one bench nigher the pulpit than afore. When I nounced that Molt had paid twenty-five dollar, fifteen dollar more'n he was sessed, the stewarts could hardly take it in. When I tole em how it was done, they wanted to draw up a set of thank resolutions. But I wouldnt let em. That's how I c'lected Molt Henry's quarterage."

"As I said, Proverdence come to my help and He shorely done it bekase I had His cause on my mind and heart. Ef I hadn't been thinkin' and

talkin' about His bisness over to Hinton on a week-day, Sim Blalock would not have give me that money and Molt could never have a played into my hands. Don't you see when a stewart is a workin' all the time fer Ole Marster he's goin' to do somethin?"

I felt the force of the reasoning and appreciated the lesson.

By this time we had returned to Bildad's stopping place. The moonlight and the trees had laid the pavement with a mosaic as beautiful as Florentine art could produce, and the peaceful stillness of the piazza was a silent invitation for me to prolong the interview, but I knew that it was time for my old friend to be in bed. So I bade him goodnight.

THE CREED OF BILDAD AKERS.

"A pusson never gits so nigh to God as when he is carryin' erlong with him some other pusson he has been prayin' fer."—*Bildad Akers.*

CHAPTER XVIII.

It was on one of those golden afternoons in latter autumn that I sat in my office and stole a respite from exacting editorial labors to look out through the open window into the full glory of the afternoon. Above the noisy street arched a pale blue sky which seemed to smile a benediction on all things below. The maple trees on the edge of the side-walk wore orange robes more beautiful than the far-famed mantles which grace the shoulders of an eastern princess. Each glowing leaf seemed to emit an amber radiance as soft as that which shines through alabaster, and the whole glorious crown of foliage shook down a flood of softened radiance which one can see at any time in a grove of maple trees in October. Part of the golden flood was gushing through the window, overflowing the whole room, and filling my soul with the music of tides that beat on no visible shore. I was noting the new beauty added by the amber light to the red and white roses in a vase on the desk, when a visitor was ushered in. He came in with heavy step and a hale bluff salutation, bringing with him, it seemed, an atmosphere of keen throbbing realism—an atmosphere, carried, as you have

doubtless perceived, by every vibrant positive soul.

I was not sorry to see Bildad Akers. The invisible light which streamed from his simple white nature harmonized with the visible glow of the maples and the whole color tone of the drowsing October afternoon.

He did not sit down at first. He said that he was "jest passin' through on his way home from a sale and thought that he would have time to drap in fer a few minutes and see as how Ivry was gittin' on."

I thanked him for such consideration and such a favor and begged him to be seated. With the statement that he couldn't stay long, he sat down on the other side of the desk.

While going through the inevitable conventional preliminaries of conversation, which seem to be instinctively demanded when two friends meet, I noticed that the lines around Bildad's mouth were not as sharply drawn as usual. There was undoubtedly in his eyes a softer look than they generally hold, and there was in the tones of his voice a caressing tenderness which was almost foreign to him. I was so impressed with these changes that I ventured to say, "You feel good to-day, don't you?"

The reply was, "I gess I feel purty peart fer a man of my yeers. I have jest come from a sale whar I made a good trade. I don't owe no man nothin', and I have a sight o' good frends. I reckin tho ef I pear to be feelin' onushially good its bekase of what I seed and felt at our meetin' at Ebenezer a week afore last. It peared to me that I got nigher to God endurin' that meetin' than I had got in a long time. I had been prayin' fer yeers fer too men who growed up with me—good nabors and havin' good pints, but they was jest so onthinkin' and keerless that they had allmost lowed salvashun to slip by 'em. As I said, I had been prayin' fer yeers fer them too-nabors, and evry time a meetin' past by leavin' them men out in the dark of sin, it throwed a kind of damper on my enjymnt of the meetin'. But at the last meetin' they give under and come out on the Lord's side. They are mighty happy men now, but I caint beleeve that they are as happy as the man who has been prayin' fer em so many yeer. I've got a heftier faith in God's promuss to answer pra'r, and when he tuk them men into his fold it peared that he leaned outer the winder and give Bildad Akers a smile which jest went to his hart and is thar yit. Maybe that's why you axed me ef I wasn't feelin' good

terday. A pusson never gits so nigh to God as when he is carryin' erlong with him some soul he has been prayin' fer. Yes, that's so, Ivry."

It was evident that the Christ-Man held dominion over the rugged soul of Bildad Akers. I said: "Bildad, I've known you, it seems to me, a long time. We have talked about many things, but I have never heard you tell your religious experience."

"Yes, that's so," said Bildad. "Maybe you don't know that I have what you might call a quare noshun of religus experunce. I don't believe a man's rale religus experunce is made up of what he feels and does at them odd times when he rastles in pra'r or gits a blessin' at a meetin', or anything like that. Of cose, at them times, he gits a visit from God and that means a sight. But my idee is that rale experunce is indeelin' with common everyday life, when a man tawks with his nabor, trades at the store, plows his mule in new groun, feels like cussin' and don't, pats a enemy on the sholeder instid of throwin' rocks at him, gits up at three o'clock in the mornin' to visit a sick nabor, gives money to the church when he aint got but mighty leetle anywhar, bein' mild and sweet-tempered on scourin' day when things is all torn up in the house,

gittin' down from a mule on a weekday when you are all gommed up with sweat and dust to tawk to some ornery sinner about his mean ways, and sich. Now experunce, cordin' to me, is helt in all them things, and jest how you do and come out o' them things detarmines a man's rale experunce. And you kin git more relijus experunce outer one day when rumatiz is goin' fer you than outer a hunderd meetin's. You may not feel so bloomin' happy in the rumatiz bisness, but you have got a sight better chance to show God how much relijun you've got. So I reckin its bekase I've got them views that you don't hear me orate bout my convarsion and the number of times I have got happy in meetin's. These times is when God jest visits me. But walkin' the common muddy roads of everyday life is the time when God is naterally hankerin' to walk with me. And your real experunce comes when He walks with you jest like Enick walked with Jehovy. I don't know ef you ketch my pint, but it is mighty clar in my own noggin."

"I reckin one reason I'm a Methodist is bekase my mammy and daddy was. Another reason, I like the doctrine of the Methodists, not as sayin' that other churches has not a site of doctrine that I kin tie to. I was never a biggotty

Methdist. Thar's lots of Baptisses and Presbyteruns and sich whats a sight better than me, and that's why I'm a Methdist. I need better heftier docktrine to balance me and keep me on the level."

"I was convarted when I was mity young. I think the life of my mammy and daddy and what I larned and felt in Sundy Scool had more to do with my seekin' Christ and jinin' the church than anything else. I wasn't convarted right arter a long stay at the altar and arter much weepin' and takin' on, though many is. I was convarted right arter my will give up the last thing I knowed God didn't like. I sensed the change as clar and strong as I would sense the change in takin' the last steps from a dry bank inter the cold water. Sence that day I have doubted myself, my religun, the religun of others, but never the fack that there is reality in religun and that Jesus Christ does fergive sins. The idee of me havin' any pa-shuns with what ole man Ellitt said some time ago! When a man knows a thing, he knows it, and thats me when it comes to sayin' ef thar is raly anything rale in religun. So I have never been in the habit of nosin' round among strange hifalutin' doctrines. To know that ef a pusson gives up his sins Christ will save him and tell him he's saved and keep him saved as long as he's

willin' to be kept saved; and help him to save others, and help him more to save himself the more he helps to save others—this is bout the kernel of all my doctrine, and I've been standin' on it a long time."

"That's why most of my religun has been in doin'. The doin' is jest the sprout comin' from the seed of my doctrine, and the life of the Sperrit is in that seed. A pusson kin jest by himself git But I'm not a-sayin' that the hunny is not some-thin' in the hands of God he's got to do it through some work fer another pusson. That's the mane reason I'm a stewart and have been so long. The idee of a Christian who don't do nothin' is as redickulus to me as the idee of a fisherman who never tetched a pole or drug a net."

"I naterally love to hear preechin'. When you see Bildad Akers outer his seat you may know he's sick or on a jurny. I never hearn a gospel sarmont that I didn't get some hunny outer it. But I'm not asayin' that the hunny is not sometimes like ole Mrs. Tanker's buttermilk—nigh all water. Thar's one thing I think the present day preechin' is a-likin' in. I don't think it deals enuff with the little plain everyday sins and vartues. That's why so many act as ef it is all right fer em to git mad, and use bad words, and

tattle bout their nabors, and not pay debts, and not keep clean, and waste time, and abuse themselves in varus ways, and lie in givin' in taxes, and cheatin' at the poles, and sich—jest so they hang on to the doctrins of the church and go to meetin', and pay quarterage and sich."

"Now, Ivry, I have give you purty much all I have to tell you about my religjun. It don't amount to much, but I wouldn't trade it off fer all the mules and hosses and farms and gold and silver in the world. So ef you don't heer me offen give in my experunce you kin member what I now tell you."

At this juncture Bildad heard the market-house clock strike four. He said, "Bless my soul, ef I didn't come in to stay jest a minnit, and now jest look at the time that has went by. I sartinly must go. Confeareance will soon be here, won't it? My preecher tole me he had evrything up and—but here I'm still a-gassin' when I ort to be on the way to the depo. Good-bye fer this time."

Thus Bildad Akers confessed his faith. I was glad of it. The sparrows were twittering outside the window, the amber glow of the maple trees was deepening in the light of the westering sun, the roses on the desk were sending out their

wealth of delicate perfume, editorial duties were calling me. Yet, for minutes and minutes, I sat with closed ears and eyes, beholding with eyes which see the invisible the vision of a simple child-like soul whose every chamber was aflame with the presence of the Eternal. It was the soul of Bildad Akers, the quaint rugged philosopher of old Ebenezer.

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